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NONCONFORMITY

ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

W. B. SELBIE, M.A., D.D

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CONTENTS

NONCONFORMITY: ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS

The rise of Nonconformity in England was due to a great variety of causes. Some of these were local and occasional in their operation, while others of them may be said to be universal and permanent. These have to do with the very nature of the Christian religion, and with the special genius of the British people. As early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the people of this country were nominally all of one faith, there were many signs that the uniformity was by no means so complete as it seemed. Saxon and Norman were not yet fused into one race. The Normans loved the ornate and splendid ritual of the Roman Church, but the Saxons were a plainer folk and preferred a simpler worship. The distinction between the two

peoples corresponded roughly to the distinction between aristocrats and democrats. The average monk or priest was an aristocrat by birth, training and association. He was not of the common people, nor was he on their side in the hour of their need. This helps to explain what happened at the Coming of the Friars. The people responded eagerly to the call of these priests, who were ready to share their lot and to speak in their tongue. The Friars had the Pope's licence to preach either in sacred buildings or in the open air, and they freely availed themselves of the privilege. Their coming wrought something like a religious revolution. With their coarse wit and homely speech they brought religion home to the men in the street, and created an ideal of religious service which did not increase the popularity of those idle shepherds who devoured their flocks instead of feeding them. The Friars were, of course, loyal sons of Rome, and there is no trace of heresy or disaffection in their preaching. But, for all that, they prepared the way for Wyclif and the Lollards, and for that temper of mind which will not always yield to authority, but loves to exercise an independent judgment in matters of religion.

It is not surprising, therefore, that even before Wyclif's day signs of revolt against the dominant Church should be not infrequently forthcoming. They were confined at first to a few obscure people, and were easily

and quickly suppressed by the iron hand of authority; but they show that the temper of the people was not unprepared for change. It was at least a hundred and fifty years before the Reformation that the process which culminated in that great movement began. The reign of Edward III marked a real step forward in the history of the English people. It was the age of Chaucer and Langland, and it saw the rise of all those intellectual, spiritual and political forces which make for religious revival and revolt. The Reformation in England and Scotland was no sudden thing, still less was it a mere political movement. It had long been prepared for, and the form it took was the result of the peculiar temper and special circumstances of the people of these islands. Among the greatest Reformers before the Reformation was John Wyclif (1320–1384), a man who, in almost every respect, was in advance of his age, and who stands out as one who has left his impress not only on his own generation, but on the whole life of our people. After having been Master of Balliol College, Oxford, he became vicar, first of Fillingham in Lincolnshire, and afterwards of Ludgershall in Buckinghamshire, and of Lutterworth in Leicestershire. During his whole life his energies were directed against the corruptions of the Church, its moral failures and its usurpation of the temporal power. Though he aimed at Reformation he was no mere

idealist. His practical mind would not suffer him to be contented with pointing out the better way; he sought to walk in it himself and to train others to follow him. He was not concerned to write and speak only for scholars, but appealed to the common people, and did so in terms which they could understand.

Wyclif's doctrine was for the age in which he lived revolutionary. He taught the sole and supreme authority of Scripture, and upheld it as against either the Church or tradition. He recognised the right of private judgment, and made men hold themselves responsible for their own religious beliefs. By his doctrine of "dominion founded in grace" he sought to defend the rights of God over the human conscience against those of priest and Pope. He appealed to the primitive Church as the source of the true doctrine of the ministry and the sacraments, and strongly condemned the use of images, relics, etc., and the celibacy of the clergy. Over against the elaborate worship and organisation of the Roman Church he set the simplicity of Christ. In all these respects he was a pioneer, and his work lived after him. Though his life was one long controversy he had many sympathisers. Both in the University of Oxford and in the country at large, there were men who only needed the kind of impulse Wyclif gave, in order to set themselves in revolt against the existing Church system. He found no difficulty, therefore, in committing

his doctrine to companies of faithful men, who made it their business to preach it up and down the land. They followed the example of the Friars and, clad in long russet gowns, barefooted, and staff in hand, wandered about teaching the people wherever they could obtain a hearing. It was by the work of these Lollards, as they came to be called, and by his rendering of the Bible into English, that Wyclif prepared the way for the real and fuller Reformation of later days. His followers were met with bitter persecution from the authorities, and, not long after Wyclif's death, the whole movement seemed to have been stamped out. In reality it was only driven underground—the seed was not killed, but only waited for its due season to germinate. Like Wesley in later times, Wyclif never separated himself from the Church of his fathers. After his death, however, his followers carried his teaching to its logical conclusion, and began to set up a new form of Church for themselves. It is in the year 1382 that we find the first use of the name "Lollard," and it was probably no more than a nickname, as was the term "Methodist," when it first began to be employed. The time was one of social distress and economic change. The Peasant Rising which culminated in 1381 was due to the ravages of the Black Death, to the imposition of the Poll tax, to the poverty caused by the French Wars, and the conse-

quent harsh measures adopted to regulate the price of food and the rate of wages. There is but little evidence to show that the social discontent was directly fostered by the teaching of the "poor priests," though it is not improbable that they sympathised with the victims of oppression and poverty, and denounced the evils of the time. In any case, the excesses of the revolt brought them no little unpopularity, and their supposed complicity with it formed a good excuse for those who were only too willing to persecute them. Recent researches have shown that in spite of the strong measures taken against them, the Lollards continued to grow, and traces of their teaching and of communities called by their name are to be found in many parts of the country. The fact that they took upon themselves to ordain others to the ministry of the word and sacraments excited the utmost horror, and goes to show how far they had become independent of the ordinary channels of religion. For more than a century and a half the persecution was continued. Acts of Parliament against Lollardy were frequent, and even when they were finally repealed under Elizabeth, the oath against it was exacted from magistrates until as late as the year 1625.

In the closing years of the reign of Richard II certain of the Lollard leaders presented to Parliament a memorial in which they denounced those practices of the Church

to which they objected. Among them were endowment, transubstantiation, vows of chastity, the blessing of inanimate things, exorcism, prayers for the dead, auricular confession, the worship of images, the holding of secular offices by priests, and the practice of unnecessary arts leading to luxury. This memorial was bitterly opposed by the clergy, led by the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London, who persuaded the King to call on the leaders of the movement to recant. This proved the beginning of a long period of persecution, which culminated in 1401 in the Act for the Burning of Heretics. From this time onwards one and another of the Lollards suffered death by fire, but the main effect of such a policy was only to swell their ranks. They held their meetings in woods, lonely fields and secret places; they scattered tracts among the people, and were diligent in denouncing the evils of the Church and State. In 1414 took place the famous gathering in St. Giles Fields, London, where a large body of Lollards came together, partly in order to hear the preaching of one John Beverley, but partly also with some wild and unformed notions of protest and revolt, against the house of Lancaster. The movement was quite abortive, but it was enough to stamp Lollardy as treason, and it led to fresh Acts of Parliament against "heresies, errors and lollardies" as being dangerous to public

order. The leaders were killed or scattered, and the whole movement was once more driven underground But it still lived; and though our records of the period are extremely scanty, they are full enough to show that throughout the whole kingdom, and especially in Buckinghamshire and the home counties, there were multitudes of devout men and women who were only waiting the time when they might openly show their dissent from the teaching and work of the Church They were "Bible men," who sought to build up Christianity again from the foundations. Some of the books and tracts written by and against them show that they by no means belonged only to the poor and illiterate classes. They had their friends in both Universities, and they could command the services of men of intelligence and learning.

It was natural that men such as these should very quickly feel the influence of the work and teaching of Luther. They became a ready channel for the spread of his ideas in England, and they were profoundly influenced by his spirit. But it is important to keep in mind that, long before Luther's day, there was in this country a genuine anticipation of his work and aims on the part of men and women who had come to feel for themselves the need of a deeper and more spiritual religion than that of the Church of their time. They worked

under the direct guidance and inspiration of the New Testament, and they reached a position which has well been described as at once evangelical and free. Negatively they were Nonconformists, quite as much as those of a later day to whom the name was first given, but their attitude was more than a mere negative one. They built on the word of God as they found it in the Scriptures, and they claimed the right to put their own interpretation upon it. In this respect they have close affinities with those Continental heretics called Publicans, Paterines and Weavers, some of whom had penetrated to England as early as the twelfth century. These are now generally regarded as representing a widespread revolt against the corruptions of the Roman Church, and in favour of a simpler and more spiritual form of faith. It is significant that John Foxe, writing in the reign of Elizabeth, was able to look back to a time when men of this temper were more numerous and more zealous than in his own day. He says: "Altho public authority then lacked to maintain the open preaching of the Gospel, yet the secret multitude of true professors was not much unequal: certes the fervent zeal of those Christian days seemed much superior to these our days and times: as manifestly may appear by their sitting up all night in reading and hearing: also by their expenses and charges in buying of books in English,

of whom some gave five marks, some more, some less for a book: some gave a load of hay for a few chapters of St. James or of St. Paul in English. In which variety of books and want of teachers this one thing I greatly marvel and muse at; to note in the Registers and to consider how the word of truth, notwithstanding, did multiply so exceedingly as it did amongst them."

It must not be supposed, however, that, in the time of which we are speaking, there were any organised Churches side by side with the established Church of the land. Men and women met together, as we have seen, to give expression to their religious needs and to worship God according to the light of their own consciences. But the meetings were secret and sporadic, and there was probably no uniformity among them either of ritual or method. But it may certainly be taken for granted that the number of them was greater than used to be supposed, and that they stood for a remarkable and widespread religious movement. Apart from this, it would be very difficult to account for the rapid advance of Protestant and Free Church doctrines in later times. The fact is that, for centuries, the ground had been prepared. In every class of the community there were men of devout life and stern spirit who were already in love with religious freedom, and sought for a higher ideal both of conduct and worship

than they were able to find in the Church as they knew it. No account of English Nonconformity can be regarded as complete, or intelligible, which does not reckon with such men as these and with the work they did.

In the reign of Henry VIII began the long quarrel which ended in the severance between the English Crown and the Papacy. With the purely political aspect of this struggle we are not here concerned, save in so far as it gave an impetus to the revolt against Rome on scriptural and religious grounds, the beginnings of which we have already traced. Both under Henry, Edward VI, and Mary there was a considerable increase in the number of the malcontents, and traces of their meetings and influence are found in most of the memorials of the period. It was in 1550 that Strype notes in regard to certain sectaries in Kent and Essex that, "These were the first that made separation from the Reformed Church of England, having gathered congregations of their own." They are described as "mean people" who met together "to talk of the Scriptures"; and mention is made of the fact that the meetings in different places held communications with each other, and even exchanged their teachers. It may be easily understood that the men who were responsible for these gatherings were not greatly affected by the fact of the substitution of the King for the Pope as the Supreme Head of the Church of

England. Certainly they would be far more keenly interested in the setting up of the first Prayer Book of Edward VI, and in the two Acts for Uniformity of Service and Worship passed in his reign (1549 and 1552). They were also profoundly affected by the change which took place under Mary; and by the persecutions which culminated in the burning of Hooper, Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer they were able to measure the condemnation in which they stood themselves. But during the whole of this period, as always, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. The revolt against Rome grew in volume and power, and found for itself complete justification, not so much in the actions of men as in the word of God.

For the turning-point in the struggle we have to look to the Continent of Europe where Luther had already done his work. As the results of this filtered into England, they gave a new aspect to the existing movement towards Reformation there. It had already received fresh intellectual impetus from the work of men like Colet and Erasmus, and in the Universities, and among the better sort of clergy, the ground was being prepared for the new harvest that was to come. The people were still, in the vast majority, strictly Catholic, and the difficulties of Henry VIII, who had to reconcile a Catholic population to an anti-Papal government, were by no means

lessened by the fact that there was growing up a large body of opinion favourable to a revolt from Rome, that was religious and theological rather than merely political or of expediency. This tendency was greatly furthered, especially in cultured circles, by the publication of the New Testament in the original tongues. The great work of the sixteenth century was the issue of Erasmus' New Testament in Greek with a Latin translation—the raising of a spiritual temple in desolated Christendom. When its author wrote, "Perhaps it may be necessary to conceal the secrets of kings, but we must publish the mysteries of Christ. The Holy Scriptures, translated into all languages, should be read not only by the Scotch and Irish, but even by Turks and Saracens. The husbandman should sing them as he holds the handle of the plough, the weaver repeat them as he plies his shuttle, and the wearied traveller, halting on his journey, refresh him under some shady tree by these godly narratives," he was building better than he knew. The work was well done, and it received a splendid welcome. It was condemned in the confessional as the source of all heresies, but in the homes of the clergy and of the more cultured laity, as well as in the Universities, it was eagerly read and canvassed. Men like Bilney and Tyndale made it their business to spread the knowledge of it, and in due time the latter pub-

lished his English translation of the New Testament, with the issue of which the Reformation in this country may be said to have really begun. Tyndale's version of the New Testament appeared in 1525. Ten years later Miles Coverdale gave to the world the whole Bible in English. And the great English Bible was authorised to be read in churches in 1539. The seed was now sown, and the story of its growing and of the fruit which it bore is the story that we have to tell.

Meanwhile Scotland too was beginning to feel the effect of the new life and was preparing for the great part which she was afterwards to play in the work of reformation. The country was poor and sparsely peopled, and had been slower to emerge from the darkness of the Middle Ages than her sister in the south. But her Church was rich, and the clergy numerous and inefficient. With wealth went corruption, and many of the rulers of the Church deserved the names of "dumb dogs," and "idle bellies," with which they were freely greeted. It was a soil ripe for revolution in religion. Lollardy had made itself felt, and in spite of persecution had never been quite put an end to. And after 1528 Lutheran influences were at work among the people, while humanism and new theology affected the Universities. The result was a certain measure of Protestantism which

captured a number of leading families, and had within it the elements of permanence. But it was Protestantism of a Calvinistic sort, and John Knox was its prophet. In the end of 1557 the first Covenant was signed and the first "Congregation of Jesus Christ" was set up in avowed opposition to the "Congregation of Satan," another name for Rome. The change in religion had much to do with the new attitude of England to Scotland. The old claim to suzerainty gradually ceased to be asserted, and the time was not far distant when it was to be seen how "earnest embracing of religion" could join two countries "straitly together."

Thus far we have seen but the dim beginnings of the movement out of which English Nonconformity ultimately grew. The embers were being kindled which were afterwards to burst into a great conflagration. The ideas were coming to birth which were one day to break forth into startling action. But the process was an exceedingly slow one, and it is only too easy to overestimate the importance of the various factors that were at work. For example, the debt of England and Scotland to Continental Protestantism is often exaggerated. No doubt the same causes were at work in both cases, but they worked side by side. And it was not, as we have seen, until things were well advanced in this country that the influence

of the German Reformation began to make itself felt. Then, again, merely political considerations played but a very small part at first in determining the minds of men towards reform, though they had much to do with shaping the form which the movement afterwards assumed Among the chief factors in the situation were the corruption of the clergy and the tyranny of the Church on the one hand, and, on the other, the new knowledge of the Bible, which gave men what they believed to be a divine standard by which they could judge the ecclesiastical system and persons of their day. From the writings of Langland and Chaucer we can understand something of the condition of the Church and of the feelings of the laity towards it in the earliest days when the new spirit made itself felt. This feeling was greatly intensified by persecution, and, by the time of Elizabeth, had become with many people an obsession. But it must not be forgotten that the Church was never wholly corrupt. There were great and crying abuses, but even among monks and nuns many holy men and women were to be found, and the old religion died very hard. Had it not been for the fear of Spain in later times, Protestantism in England would have been far more difficult to establish; and the partial failure of Puritanism shows how deeply Catholicism was rooted in the affections of Englishmen. But with all their ove for the ancient Church they were not

able to withstand the appeal of the Scriptures. The contrast between the religion of the New Testament and that of the Church was too violent. To the hard common sense of Englishmen and the logical acuteness of Scotchmen these two ideals seemed impossible of reconciliation. It was this feeling which gave sting and force to the preaching of Knox, and when for a time Englishmen became, as they were called, the people of the Book, the fate of Romanism in this country was sealed.

For the moment, however, the conflict was between the Roman Church and the new spirit. The first result of this was to substitute only an Anglican Church for the Roman, and the Supremacy of the Crown for that of the Pope. In Scotland, indeed, something was being heard of the Crown rights of Jesus, but in England there was as yet little or no objection to the new order. But the very principles that produced Protestantism were capable of a wider and more logical application. We have yet to see how Protestantism in its turn produced Puritanism, and how out of Puritanism grew that Separatism which is the root and parent of Nonconformity in the strict and modern sense of the term. The Nonconformist spirit was, as we have seen, directly anticipated in Wyclif's doctrine of Divine dominion, which gave paramount importance to man's individual relations with God and made them regulative

of all else. In stating this as he did, Wyclif was in advance of his day, and it is not surprising that the ideal he held up never really took shape in fact. But the spirit which animated him and his followers, the Lollards, was never quite crushed even by the organisations through which it sought to find utterance. While for a time the religious struggle seems to be that of Church against Church it is really more. The importance of these early days for the history of Nonconformity lies in the fact that we can see there writ large, and in crude and simple form, the principles which afterwards became so potent. They are thrown into bold relief over against the elaborate organisation which they were to combat, and they stand as representing the very life and soul of religion, which requires to grow its own body, rather than fit itself into one ready made.

CHAPTER II

THE ANGLICAN SETTLEMENT AND THE PURITAN REACTION

It is not without just pride that Englishmen look back to the "spacious days" of Queen Elizabeth as the most formative period in

their national history. The time was again one of extraordinary awakening—political, intellectual and religious. It saw the beginning of our modern world, and, both in controversy and in constructive statesmanship, it laid down lines which were to be followed for many a long day. The discovery of the New World, the expansion of commercial relations, and the successful war with Spain, were all epoch-making events. Add to these the intellectual revolution represented by the names of Shakespeare and Bacon, and the religious revolution marked by the Anglican settlement and the rise of Puritanism and Separatism, and we have a series of achievements unmatched in any other period of our island story. It is, of course, with the religious and ecclesiastical situation that we are here chiefly concerned, and we have to take note of other features of the time only as they bear on our main subject.

Elizabeth came to the throne in the full tide of the reaction against Roman claims and policy. The Marian persecutions on the one hand, and the threatening attitude of Spain on the other, had thoroughly alarmed the English people, and the Queen, knowing the uncertainty of her own position, shared their fears. She was herself an opportunist, having no real religious convictions and but little regard for truth. But she had a genuine love for her country, and the sole aim of her policy was to maintain her throne and

strengthen and consolidate the power of England. She could assume many parts herself, and was an adept at playing off her opponents one against another. But she never lost sight of her main purpose, and it must be admitted that, through all the tortuous paths of her policy, it was steadily advanced. Among the earliest efforts of her reign the Anglican settlement must be reckoned as the most successful and the most important. The word settlement, however, can only be justly used by those who look back on the obscure and almost fortuitous happenings of the time in the light of their results. But the fact remains that the Queen and her Parliament secured a really durable arrangement, against the will of the ecclesiastics, and over the heads of the people. Elizabeth had astutely declined to assume her father's position as head of the Church, knowing it to be as offensive to the Calvinists as to the Romans themselves. But Parliament compromised for her on the phrase, that she was the only Supreme Governor of the realm as well in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things or causes as in temporal, and that no foreign prince or prelate had any ecclesiastical or spiritual authority within her dominions. At the same time they revived a statute of Henry VIII proclaiming the King as head of the Church, and declaring that by the word of God all ecclesiastical jurisdiction flows from him. This famous Act of Supremacy was only

secured after long debate, and was followed, in the same year (1559), by the first of a succession of Acts of Uniformity, the effect of which has been to produce strife and division in English Christendom from those days until now. The basis of these measures was the Prayer Book of 1552, which was but slightly altered to meet the needs of the moment. The use of it was made compulsory in order to secure uniformity of prayer and service, and of the administration of the sacraments. To make use of any other form of worship was made a penal offence. At the same time the Act required that every man should be present every Sunday at the legal services thus set up. All this was distinctly the work of the Queen and Parliament, and was accomplished in defiance of the Church and her representatives. Neither the bishops nor the clergy consented to it, but they were powerless in the matter The Bishop of Chester voiced their feelings when he said, "As to religion, I humbly conceive that it is a subject altogether foreign to the business of Parliament." "The body of Parliament consists mostly of the temporal nobility, and the commons, which, tho persons of great judgment and learning in civil matters, yet divinity is none of their profession. The exposition of the Scriptures, the reading of the ancients, has been none of their employment. These things considered, they cannot be supposed to be rightly qualified

to pronounce upon the doctrines and practice of the Church. Neither, indeed, do these things belong to their function or lie within their character." This bold protest was quite unavailing. All the bishops who refused the oath were deprived, and with them over two hundred of the clergy. But for a long time neither the Act of Supremacy nor the Act of Uniformity were at all generally observed. It was part of the clever policy of the Queen and her advisers to be lenient with the Roman Catholics and not to press the Protestant position too strongly at first. It was not until 1571 that subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles was enforced. This required a renunciation of the Romish creed, and was a point strongly in favour of the Puritans. It had the effect of rounding off the revolution in religion, by requiring the English clergy to renounce not only the jurisdiction of the Pope, but the creed of the Roman Church.

But, during the whole time that this was going on, feeling among the people was developing more rapidly than either at the Court or in Parliament. Many of the livings made vacant under the Act of Uniformity had been filled by men who desired a more drastic reformation than the Queen was ready to allow, and men of this temper also secured a much larger representation in the Houses of Convocation than their strength in the country warranted. By this time

the name Puritan was in general use to designate those within the Anglican communion who sought a simpler faith and service than was allowed for in the new regulations. Many of these took the law into their own hands, and, in the general disorder of the times, thought themselves justified in arranging matters of ritual to suit themselves. Among the irregularities noted at the time were, saying the prayers in the chancel or in the pulpit; preaching and administering the communion without a surplice; placing the communion table in the body of the church or in the middle of the chancel; allowing the communion to be received standing or sitting, and baptizing without the sign of the cross. The prevalence of such practices led to increased efforts to enforce the Act of Uniformity, and these in their turn to a more open disregard of it. In consequence, many more clergy were deprived, and not a few churches, especially in London, were left without pastors. It was in this way that Puritanism led inevitably to Separatism. The great body of the Puritans had no wish to sever themselves from the national Church. They were merely concerned to carry out the Protestant settlement to its logical conclusions.

From this time forward, therefore, the Protestant movement in this country followed a double course, and developed along two parallel lines. On the one hand we have

to note the rise and growth of Puritanism within the National Church, and on the other is to be found the beginning of Nonconformity proper, in the setting up of little communities of "separated" Christians outside of and in direct opposition to the Church of England. As regards the former of these, we must note that the term Puritan did not come into general use until about the year 1564, and that it was a vague popular name, or even nick-name, for a moral and religious temper of mind, rather than for a definite organisation. It was not until a much later period that it came to stand for the political party which attempted to assert the rights and liberties of the people against the usurpations of the Crown. For a long time the work and character of the Puritans were chiefly known through the writings of their opponents, and were seen in caricature rather than in the light of facts. This has led to no little prejudice against them, a prejudice for which history does not give any real justification. Their leaders, in the period with which we are dealing, were men who believed profoundly in the sovereignty of God and in the authority of Scripture, who practised a severe morality, and were deeply attached to the cause of civil and religious liberty. Some of them were among the most learned and enlightened men of their day. They were to be found in both the Universities, and were by no means antagonistic to culture and

refinement of life. The strictness of their morals and the preciseness of their manners and dress became a laughing-stock to the men of a dissolute and luxurious Court, but these things represented a healthy reaction against certain vicious tendencies of the time, and, if they were sometimes carried to an extreme of fanaticism, in their inception, at least, they had no little justification. If the Puritans seemed sometimes to lay undue stress on minor matters of ritual and ceremony, this was only because they saw that these things involved principles the maintenance of which was to them a matter of life and death.

The first definite assertion of the Puritan position was brought about by the efforts of the Court to enforce the Act of Uniformity. In the meeting of Convocation summoned during Elizabeth's second Parliament in 1563, the question of vestments at once came to the front. A Petition was presented by a number of leading Church dignitaries pleading that the posture of kneeling at the Lord's Supper should not be insisted upon, that the sign of the cross in baptism should be disused, that the wearing of surplices and copes should cease, and that a "comely side garment" should take the place of all other vestments. By a majority of only one, Convocation decided to make no alteration in the existing order, and the Puritans were defeated. Many of them, however, declined to be bound by the action of Convocation,

and irregularities in the matter of dress and ritual became more and more common. But the Queen "was unable to endure the least alteration in the matter of religion," and ordered Archbishop Parker rigorously to enforce the law. Parker carried out his orders by issuing, on his own authority, a series of "Advertisements" commanding the use of the cope at the communion in cathedrals and collegiate churches, and the surplice with sleeves in parish churches. These "Advertisements" the Puritans, led by the President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and the Dean of Christchurch, stoutly resisted. Their action indicated a growing aversion to Romish habits and practices both among the clergy and laity, and, as the result of it, both at Oxford and Cambridge, many men were deprived of their livings and some were imprisoned. Matters reached a crisis in London in the year 1566, when Parker and the Bishop of London cited the clergy of the city to appear before them at Lambeth. About a hundred and ten presented themselves, and were confronted with a minister properly attired in the prescribed vestments. The Chancellor of the diocese then spoke: "My masters and the ministers of London, the Council's pleasure is that ye strictly keep the unity of apparel like to this man as ye see him: that is, a square cap, a scholar's gown priestlike, or tippet, and in the Church a linen surplice; and

inviolably observe the Book of Common Prayer, and the Queen's Majesty's injunctions and the Book of Convocation. Ye that will presently subscribe write volo. Those that will not subscribe write nolo. Be brief, make no words." When the names were called, thirty-seven refused to conform, " of which number were the best and some preachers," says Parker. But their good qualities did not save them, for they were summarily suspended. They suffered with a clear conscience, and a full recognition of the consequences. Some of them left the ministry for various scholastic pursuits, some became chaplains in the families of Puritan gentry, some joined the Presbyterians in Scotland, and some emigrated. Five persisted in preaching, and were committed by the Queen's Council as prisoners in the private custody of various bishops.

When it became evident that there was to be no relaxation of the Act of Uniformity, certain of the deprived ministers and other Puritans held a conference in London on the question of the lawfulness and necessity of separation from the Established Church. After much debate, an agreement was arrived at in the following terms: " That since they could not have the word of God preached, nor the Sacraments administered, without idolatrous gear: and since there had been a separate congregation in London and another in Geneva in Mary's time, using a

book and order of Service approved by Calvin, which was free from the superstitions of the English service: therefore it was their duty in their present circumstances to break off from the public Churches and to assemble as they had opportunity in private houses, or elsewhere, to worship God in a manner that might not offend against the light of their consciences." This statement marks a parting of the ways. It was the beginning of the Separatist movement, which henceforth advanced along the lines thus laid down. There was still a large leaven of Puritanism within the Church of England, and many who remained Nonconforming members of the Church. But alongside of them, there were others who at once carried their convictions to a logical issue, and began to form Churches on another model than that of the old Church of Rome. One of the earliest of these "gathered Churches" was formed in June 1567, and met at Plumbers Hall in the city of London. Its meetings were broken up by the authorities, and when its leaders were summoned before Grindal, who was then Archbishop, they defended themselves in the following memorable words: "So long as we might have the word freely preached and the sacraments administered without the preferring of idolatrous gear about it, we never assembled together in houses. But when it came to this, that all our preachers were displaced by your

law, so that we could hear none of them in any Church by the space of seven or eight weeks, and were troubled and commanded by your courts from day to day for not coming to our parish Churches, then we bethought us what were best to do. And now if from the word of God, you can prove we are wrong we will yield to you and do open penance at St. Paul's Cross: if not, we will stand to it by the grace of God." These words show very clearly that the Nonconformity of the early Puritans was altogether against the grain. There is no trace in them of the dissidence of dissent. They take their stand reluctantly and under the pressure of conscience. They can do no other. Their estrangement from the Church was brought about very gradually, and was the result of the intolerance of the authorities, and especially of the Queen, rather than of their own contumacy. They would have remained within the Church had it been made at all possible for them to do so with a clear conscience.

The next act in the drama now unfolding itself was the publication of the Puritan manifesto called the "First Admonition." This was the result of a Conference in London in the year 1572, and it still further defines the Puritan position at this period. The Admonition presents for the godly consideration of Parliament the changes which are necessary in order to secure a right ministry

and a right government of the Church. It is contended that the old Romanist ministry of Henry and Mary should be removed, and should give place to a ministry elected by the elders, and with the consent of the whole Church. The minister should be *called*, and not thrust on a congregation from without. The only true officers of a Church are ministers or pastors, elders and deacons, and these should take the place of the existing hierarchy. Election by the congregation should take the place of the Bishop's authority, and the Church should be purged of Roman practices and be remodelled on the basis of the Reformed Churches of Scotland and the Continent. This Admonition produced considerable stir, and at once passed through several editions. Its authors were committed to Newgate, and the task of answering them was entrusted to Whitgift. He, in conjunction with two Bishops, produced a defence of the Church of England based on the contention that what is Apostolic is not necessarily binding, and that what is Roman is not necessarily to be excluded from Anglicanism. The answer brought forth a second Admonition from the pen of Thomas Cartwright, which contained an elaborate plan of the Reformed Church as he would have it. There was to be an elected ministry in which all were equal, and government of the Church by conferences, synods and local consistories, which latter should have the

power of excommunication and supervision of morals, and should be able to send representatives to provincial synods or councils. The plan of the Church sketched in these Admonitions was heartily condemned by the authorities, but found no little favour both among the clergy of the better sort and the laity. There is evidence that, in not a few counties, voluntary associations of the kind here indicated were established for the reformation of manners and religion. At the same time, the religious exercises called Prophesyings were becoming common, and went some way to meet the need for preaching and religious instruction which was everywhere felt. In spite of all efforts to suppress them, these innovations were in great favour with the people, and did much to bring Puritanism into popularity.

Under the influence of Cartwright, whose lectures and sermons at Cambridge had given him great weight in their counsels, the Puritans within the Church now made it their policy to attempt to substitute Presbytery for Episcopacy. The idea was not so quixotic as it might seem, for it must be remembered that, once the severance from Rome had taken place, the whole system of the English Church was in the melting-pot. The retention of the Episcopate was the result of following the line of least resistance. There was no divine right about their position at all, and we find Dr. Ham-

mond, the Chancellor of the diocese of London, writing to Lord Burleigh in the year 1588 as follows: "The Bishops of our realm do not (so far as I ever yet heard), nor may not, claim to themselves any other authority than is given them by the statute of the 25th of King Henry VIII, recited in the first year of Her Majesty's reign, neither is it reasonable they should make other claim, for if it had pleased Her Majesty with the wisdom of the realm to have used no bishops at all, we could not have complained justly of any defect in our Church." With such ideas as these in vogue, it is not to be wondered at if many of the Puritans dreamed of a Reformed Church in England, after the model of the non-Episcopalian Churches of the Continent and the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. In 1572 a Church after the Presbyterian model was established at Wandsworth, and a few years later Presbyterianism was definitely set up in the Channel Islands to meet the needs of the numerous French Protestant refugees to be found there. These years may be said to mark the birth of the Presbyterian Church in this country, although there was as yet no very definite severance from the Church of England. We have to note, however, the rise of a Presbyterian wing of the Puritans, a movement which was very fruitful in results at a later period.

Meanwhile, in the country at large, Puritanism was increasing and consolidating its

forces. Many of the men whose voices had been silenced continued to preach by means of the pen. It was the age of the pamphleteer, and there appeared from printing presses in various places large numbers of fugitive writings, which exposed, in no measured terms, the condition of things within the Church, and advocated a return to a simpler and more scriptural order. But such a propaganda was only carried out with very great difficulty and danger. The government had all printing presses under observation and limited their number. None were to be set up outside London, Oxford and Cambridge, and all books were to be censored by the Archbishop and the Bishop of London, or some one whom they appointed. In spite of these regulations, however, the Puritans succeeded in setting up printing presses of their own, and often evaded the authorities by moving them rapidly from place to place. Their writings were eagerly bought and read, and were of undoubted influence in spreading the movement. Among the most important of these tracts for the times were *Diotrephes*, or *The State of the Church of England laid open in a Conference*, by John Udall, vicar of Kingston-on-Thames, and the famous Martin Marprelate letters, the authorship of which will probably always remain a mystery. These were issued by the same printer, one Waldegrave, and created an immense sensation. They ridiculed the

pretensions of the clergy, and attacked the whole hierarchical system with bitter satire and burning invective. They were coarse and popular writings, but never quite descended to the scurrility of some of the opponents of Puritanism. Those chiefly concerned in issuing the Marprelate series were Job Throckmorton, a Puritan squire of Warwickshire; John Penry, the Welshman; and Waldegrave and his successor, John Hodgkins. The work of these men roused the clerical party to keen resentment and reprisals. By the order of Whitgift, Udall was imprisoned until he died, the printing presses were seized, and a ban was put on every kind of Puritan writing. These measures only served to stir to greater activity and to drive still further away from the Church of England the men who could not subscribe to the terms of her rulers. To an increasing number of these it became manifest that no terms were possible with the Church under the existing régime. The longer Elizabeth lived the more insistent became her claims to absolute authority in things ecclesiastical; and, in urging these claims, she found in Whitgift a fit tool for her purpose. So far as outward appearance went, she won the fight against the Puritans all along the line. Their leaders were deprived of their livings, and great multitudes of them were imprisoned. They had to carry on their propaganda in secret; their books were confiscated; and

many of them went in peril of their lives. Here and there men and women were burned for their faith, and in Essex alone some fifty preachers were silenced or deprived. Among those suspended was the excellent George Gifford of Malden, and his case may be cited as a typical one. Strype, who was certainly no friend of the Puritans in general, says of him: "He was valued much for the good reformation he had made in that market town by his preaching: whereby notorious sins reigned before his coming; and others had been by his diligence nourished and strengthened in grace and virtue (as the inhabitants in a petition to the Bishop in his behalf had set forth at large), and that in his life he was modest, discreet and unreprovable: that he never used conventicle but ever preached and catechised in the Church." Nothing could be more contrary to the fact than the too common assumption that these early Puritans were vulgar and turbulent men who resisted authority from mere love of strife. They were, on the other hand, the best of the clergy, the men who preached and were at pains to teach the people and carry out the duties of their sacred office. It is among their opponents and persecutors that we have to look for unlearned and ignorant clergy, who neglected their cures, and preyed on the flock instead of feeding it. All the available testimony goes to show that the deprivations and persecutions of

Elizabeth's time really injured the Church by stripping her of her best workers, and substituting for them men who were a ready prey for the wit and scorn of writers like Marprelate. The fact was abundantly recognised at the time and went far to confirm the Puritans in their convictions, and to drive many of them to carry out their position to its logical conclusions by definitely separating themselves from a Church with which they had so little in common. Even at this early period their main object in doing so was to secure freedom to exercise their religion according to their consciences and to purify the Church of abuses. For the most part these men were within the Church at the period we have reached, being either Puritans proper who accepted Episcopacy but would reform it, or Presbyterians who saw no hope of reform under an Episcopal system. Outside the Church, Puritanism tended to some form of Independency, the development of which we have yet to trace. As to their general attitude, the Puritans are often blamed for being too scrupulous about small matters, such as vestments. In their eyes, however, these were important enough because they involved principles. When principles were at stake they had a very keen sense of duty, and the courage to act up to it

CHAPTER III

THE SEPARATISTS

Puritanism, as we have known it so far, was rather a spirit or temper of mind than a definite movement or organisation. It represented the Protestant tendency within the Church of England, and it was only a few of its extreme advocates who contemplated the setting up of Churches outside the Anglican pale. For many years to come the great majority of the Puritans protested against being regarded either as Separatists or Anabaptists. They were nonconforming members of the Church of England, in the sense that they accepted the ordinances of the Church, and only separated themselves from what they regarded as its corruptions and disorders. When, however, it became only too apparent that the Court and the Bishops were not of their mind in regard to these corruptions, and were prepared to enforce them upon all alike, an increasing number of the Puritans found themselves driven to reconsider their position, and sought a purer form of Church government and worship, some across the seas in Holland and afterwards in America, and others by setting up separated Churches at home. These Churches took naturally what is known as a congregational way, and became the

forerunners of the Baptist and Congregational denominations of modern times.

The first, and in some respects the greatest, of the Separatists was Robert Browne, a Cambridge man of good family, who, along with his friend and fellow-student Robert Harrison, founded at Norwich what may be regarded as the first Congregational Church outside London in 1580 or 1581. Browne has been the subject of much controversy. He was certainly no hero. When an old man he recanted under pressure, and took office in the Church of England. His followers naturally enough repudiated the name Brownist, which was often flung at them almost as a term of reproach. But the man was, in every sense, a pioneer. He saw clearly what he wanted, and said clearly what he meant. His books laid the foundations of the Congregational system, and he deserves all credit for the work he did. No doubt he owed a good deal to the Anabaptists of Holland, for it is now proved that he had visited them before he began to write. But he was no slavish imitator of them, and he altogether repudiated their excesses and their doctrine of the sacraments. Browne was a genius, and had all the defects of his qualities as such. Therefore, while we recognise his limitations, we must not judge him too harshly.

His teaching is to be found in two books. The first and most important of them was

entitled, *A Book which showeth the Life and Manners of all true Christians*; and the second, *A Treatise of Reformation without tarrying for Anie.* Browne here lays down the fundamental Congregational principle that the members of a Christian Church must be Christians, and that the one and only ruler of the Church is Jesus Christ Himself. "The Church planted or gathered is a company or number of Christians or believers, which, by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ, and keep his laws in one holy communion: because Christ hath redeemed them unto holiness and happiness for ever, from which they were fallen by the sin of Adam." "The Church Government is the Lordship of Christ in the communion of his offices: whereby his people obey to his will, and have mutual use of their graces and callings, to further their godliness and welfare." ("A book which showeth," § 35.) Under this headship of Christ, Churches were to be self-governing; but, where an individual Church had difficulty, matters were to be referred to a Synod, consisting, not of delegates, but of all the Churches meeting together. The officers of the Church—pastors, teachers and elders—were to form a permanent Church Council for matters of advice and discipline. Their authority, however, was not derived from the people but from "the office and message of God," and it was the function of the Church

to decide to whom this office and message was entrusted, and to set them apart for their special work. Thus it will be seen that Browne's system was not pure Congregationalism, but contained an element of Presbyterianism, though he had no sympathy whatever with those who, like Cartwright, sought to set up Presbyterianism within Episcopacy. His importance lies in the fact that he first gave ordered and articulate expression to those more democratic and spiritual ideas of Churchmanship which resulted from the study of the New Testament model, and from comparison between the Churches there described and the Church as it was then known in England.

That these ideas were not confined to one part of the country is indicated by the records which have been preserved of a Separatist Church which met in London as early as the year 1571. Its members describe themselves as "a poor congregation whom God hath separated from the Church of England and from the mingled and false worshipping therein." They mention one, Richard Fitz, as their minister, and Thomas Bowland, deacon, both of whom, they say, pined to death in prison. This little community was soon broken up by the authorities, but the ideas it represented were not to be easily suppressed. It had successors in different parts of London, sporadic gatherings of faithful men and women who met together

to worship God in accordance with conscience and in defiance of the law.

It is in connection with one of these gatherings in Islington (1586) that we meet with the names of Greenwood and Barrow, two of the most famous of the early Separatist leaders. These men, like Browne, had both been trained at Cambridge. Barrow was a young barrister of dissolute life who had been converted by the chance hearing of a sermon and became a Puritan. As his kinsman, Lord Bacon, says, "He made a leap from a vain and libertine youth to a preciseness in the highest degree." His new departure brought him into close intimacy with Greenwood, who had imbibed Puritan opinions under Cartwright at Cambridge, but had afterwards resigned his orders in the Church of England and become a Separatist. He was a leader in the London congregation, and was arrested by the order of Whitgift. Barrow went to visit him in the Clink prison in 1586, and was himself illegally detained The two men were committed to the Fleet in the following year and remained there until their execution at Tyburn in 1593. They were indicted under the Act of 1581, which was really directed against Roman Catholics, but became now a very convenient instrument for dealing with Nonconformists of all kinds

Again and again during their imprisonment Barrow and Greenwood were examined as to

their views, sometimes before the Archbishop's Court of High Commission at Lambeth and sometimes before the Council at Whitehall, under Burghley, the Lord Treasurer. The records of these examinations are extant, and form one of the most moving recitals of this period of persecution. It is significant of the temper of the times that even the saintly Bishop Andrewes took part in the work of baiting these poor men, though it seems to have been very little to his taste. The appearance of the culprits was not altogether creditable. They spoke harshly, and often unadvisedly, and were easily set down by authority as foolish fanatics. But it must be remembered that their spirit was broken by their long and miserable confinement, and their pitiful appeals for considerate treatment met with no response. They were bullied and browbeaten, but throughout it all their convictions remained unshaken, and they gave no ground for any charge of treason or disloyalty. In the end they were subjected to the torture of being twice taken to the place of execution, and, when the rope was round their necks, reprieved amid the plaudits of the crowd. The third time no reprieve came. They made an excellent end and prayed for the Queen's Majesty.

These men were only two out of some threescore and twelve persons who were imprisoned in the later years of Elizabeth for holding

Separatist opinions. In 1592 a petition was presented to Parliament from some fifty-six of these. It is said to have been written by Barrow, and is a trenchant indictment of "the prelates of this land and their complices." "These godless men have put the blood of war about them in the day of the peace and truce which this whole land professeth to hold with Jesus Christ and his servants. Bishops Bonner, Story, Weston dealt not after this sort. For those whom they committed close they would also either feed or permit to be fed by others: and they brought them in short space openly into Smithfield to end their misery and to begin their never-ending joy. Whereas Bishop Elmar, Dr. Stanhope, and Mr. Justice Young, with the rest of that persecuting and blood-thirsty faculty, will do neither of these. No felons, no murderers, no traitors in this land are thus dealt with. There are many of us, by the mercies of God, still out of their hands. The former holy exercise and profession we purpose not to leave by the assistance of God. We have as good warrant to reject the ordinances of Antichrist, and labour for the recovery of Christ's holy institutions as our fathers and brethren in Queen Mary's days had to do the like. And we doubt not if our cause were truly known unto Her Majesty and your wisdoms, but we should find greater favour than they did, whereas our estate now is far more lamentable. And,

therefore, we humbly and earnestly crave of Her Majesty and your Lordships—both for ourselves abroade and for our brethren now in miserable captivity—but just and equal trial according unto Her Majesty's laws. If we prove not our adversaries to be in a most pestilent and godless course, both in regard of their offices and their proceedings in them, and ourselves to be in the right way, we desire not to have the benefit of Her Majesty's true and faithful subjects, which of all earthly favours we account to be one of the greatest. Are we malefactors ? Are we anywise undutiful unto our Prince ? Maintain we any errors ? Let us then be judicially convicted thereof and delivered to the civil authority. But let not these bloody men both accuse, condemn, and closely murther after this sort, contrary to all law, equity, and conscience, where they alone are the plaintiffs, the accusers, the judges, and the executioners of their most fearful and barbarous tyranny. They should not by the laws of this land go any farther in cases of religion than their own ecclesiastical censure, and then refer us to the civil power."

A little more than a month after the execution of Barrow and Greenwood, the Bishops found another victim in John Penry. This was a young Welshman who had renounced Romanism while at the University, but had become a Separatist only a short time before. He was specially marked for trial as the

reputed author of the Marprelate tracts, whose biting satires on the hierarchy had become inconveniently popular. Though Penry was probably not their author, he had much to do with their publication, and suffered accordingly.

The chief effect of these persecutions was to scatter the seeds of Separatism yet more widely. There now began that series of emigrations which culminated in the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers to the New World and reacted in many ways on the Independent Churches at home. The Conventicle Act of 1592 drove the Separatists abroad and threatened them with death if they returned. Some of them took the risk of remaining, but many of them found a home in Amsterdam and set up an Independent Church there under the leadership of Henry Ainsworth and Francis Johnson. Holland was a welcome place of refuge for the persecuted in these troubled times. The Reformed Evangelical Church had full liberty there, and the sympathies of the people were with the Nonconformists of England. Considerable companies of them from some twenty-nine English counties went over during the years from 1595 to 1620. It was a band of exiles from Gainsborough and Scrooby that ultimately formed the Church at Leyden under John Robinson, and it was from that Church that the founders of New England sailed in the *Mayflower*.

But the story of the Church in Holland is not altogether an edifying one. The Independent or Congregational system is one that requires a truly Christian standard of conduct if it is to be successfully maintained. Where this is absent it invariably breaks down. In the old days, as is often the case still, the system was too fine for the weak men and women who were called upon to administer it. Jealousies of a petty personal kind broke out. There were unseemly wrangles and factions, and the spirit shown was narrow and censorious to a degree. For all that, however, the movement was not really retarded. It was too great a thing to be injured permanently by the personal defection of a few. In the free air of a new country men had time to mature their ideas and to put them into shape. Books and pamphlets were written which carried the seed of the new doctrine far afield, and the exile nourished a freer and more vigorous type of religion, which speedily reacted on the Separatist communities of the mother-land.

It is in connection with the Amsterdam Church that we come across the beginnings of the Baptist denomination as distinguished from the Independent. There had come over with the Gainsborough exiles one, John Smyth, who had been lecturer or preacher to the City of Lincoln, but had been deposed from his office for holding Separatist views. He was a man of singular but erratic genius

and of an excellent Christian temper. He had a bold and open mind, and did not hesitate to follow wherever he thought the truth led him. At Amsterdam he, at first, practised as a physician, but very soon became the leader of what was known as the Second Church there. There is some doubt indeed whether he ever belonged to the Church of Johnson and Ainsworth. Smyth was not a man who could easily range himself with others. He had already published several small books and pamphlets maintaining the Brownist theory of Church government and defending the apostolic and primitive character of the new order. In 1609 he advanced upon these by issuing *The Character of the Beast*, in which he definitely set forth his Baptist views. His position, briefly, was that infants ought not to be baptized, because it is not enjoined in the New Testament, nor are there any examples of the practice, and because Christ commanded to make disciples by teaching, and that only afterwards were they to be baptized. Smyth immediately proceeded to put his theory into practice by baptizing first himself, then one of his most prominent adherents, Mr. Helwys, and then the rest of his friends, all on their individual confessions. Later he came to doubt whether he had done right, and had himself and his friends rebaptized by the Memnonite Church in Amsterdam.

At this time the conflict between Calvinism and Arminianism was at its height. The Independents were strongly Calvinistic, but Smyth as strongly asserted the Arminian position. He maintained that "infants are conceived and born in innocency without sin, and so dying are undoubtedly saved," and that "God doth not predestinate any man to destruction." In these bold opinions he was followed by Helwys; and when, after his death, Helwys transferred the Baptist Congregation to Newgate Street, London, this little church, under his leadership, had the honour of being the first place in England where absolute liberty of religion and conscience was proclaimed. It was by the Baptists, in the first instance, that toleration was practised and that the full doctrine of religious freedom was maintained. John Smyth's confession of 1612 contained the words: "The magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion or doctrine." And the reason given for this was, that "Christ only is the King and lawgiver of the Church and Conscience." This position followed directly from the stress laid by the Baptists on conversion as something entirely between a man and his God. It could not in any way be forced by outside authority, and so no outside authority had any right over a man's conscience and faith. At the same

time men must respect the religious views of others, as being at least equally sincere with their own. It was a long time before this spirit of tolerance and freedom was accepted by any section of the Church, but the Baptists have the credit of being the first to state and recommend it.

In this early period, as in all their later history, Baptists and Independents accepted the same system of Church government. There was a good deal of elasticity in organisation, but on the main principles writers on both sides were agreed. That Christ was the sole Head of the Church, that all the members of the Church must be Christians, that the government of the Church should be in the hands of its members, and that the State had no right of interference—these were elementary points on which the Separatists of both sections were at one. Hostile writers of later date were not content with these simplicities, but ascribed to the Churches in Holland, and to their friends in this country, the most extraordinary excesses both of doctrine and conduct. Doubtless there were many connected with these Churches who gave some colour to the charge. The time was one of great mental unrest, and of the breaking of many old bonds, and the Separatists shared to the full the spirit of their age. Nor is the atmosphere of persecution generally productive of sobriety and common-sense views. It is

therefore much to the credit of these early Nonconformists that, so far as their extant writings are concerned, there should be so little in them that is merely extravagant. They stated their position in a sober and judicial fashion, and in its main essentials it is the position which their representatives and successors have maintained ever since. The difficulty about it, then as now, was that the position represented an ideal which required something more than ordinary human nature to work it. It must be admitted that the Separatists did not always live up to their professions, and that in their ideal of the Church and of Christian life there is something almost "too great and good for human nature's daily food." For all that, however, the movement they represent was a very great one, and must be given its due place among all the wonderful activities of the Elizabethan age. Its greatness, as well as its limitations, may be seen in the history of those emigrants who tried to found a Church and State after their own hearts across the Atlantic. In their zeal for pure religion, their love for education, and their high standard of civilisation, the Puritans of New England showed what their system was capable of when it had free play. If it was marred by much intolerance and a certain theological narrowness, this only serves as an indication that it was not altogether emancipated from the spirit of

the time. The Separatists were no worse in these respects than their contemporaries, while in others they were so far superior that the truths for which they stood have gradually won their way to almost universal recognition and respect. Their representative men were not, as is so often suggested, common and unlearned. Let it be repeated again that they were men of culture and almost invariably of University education. They had reached their position through thought and study, and they were able to hold it intelligently against all comers. And, what was perhaps more important, they had behind them a living Christian experience which fortified them against persecution and ridicule alike.

The finest example of early Nonconformity is undoubtedly the Church at Leyden in Holland. Under the guidance of John Robinson, himself the noblest of the Separatists, this Church became a striking object-lesson as to what Nonconformist principles could accomplish when fairly translated into action. Governor Bradford writes of them: "They lived together in love and peace all their days without any considerable difference or any disturbance that grew thereby, but such as was easily healed in love, and so they continued until with mutual consent they removed into New England." There is abundant testimony to the same effect from other writers, and the history

of this Church is one that every Nonconformist may look back to with pride and satisfaction. Robinson was a voluminous writer and a keen controversialist. But of all the religious writers of his time he is distinguished for breadth of spirit and charity of speech. He was firm in his own convictions and sure of his own mind, but he was willing to allow the same liberty to others that he claimed himself, and could realise the spiritual brotherhood of those who were widely divided from him in opinion. Robinson was largely responsible for drawing up the covenant of the *Mayflower*, the first real charter of civil and religious liberty, and his broad outlook and generous temper are illustrated by the oft-quoted words in his final address to the Pilgrims on their departure from Leyden: "I am very confident that the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his Holy word."

Very similar in temper to Robinson was Henry Jacob, who returned from Holland in 1616 and founded a Congregational Church at Southwark. Jacob was an Oxford man, who had played some part in the Puritan controversy and had become a Separatist by sheer force of circumstances. The Church he founded was the first of the kind to take root on English soil. After Jacob's death in 1624 it had famous pastors in John Lathrop, Praise-God Barbon or Barebones, Henry Jessey and Hanserd Knollys, both Cambridge

graduates. It has special importance also for the history of the Baptists, for out of it at least five Baptist churches sprang, and the Mother Church itself became Baptist in principle, first with an open, and afterwards with a strict membership. Though the Church practised believers' baptism, the method was not that of immersion, which only became general among the strict Baptists about 1638. The history of this Church illustrates the close relation between Baptists and Independents in these early days, and shows how the question of Baptism, though the subject of acute controversy, was dealt with at first in such a way as to cause no more than a friendly separation of Churches. The Baptists formally adopted immersion in a series of articles drawn up in 1644, and from that time onwards have been a separate denomination. At the time of which we are speaking the differences between them and the Independents were not such as to preclude friendly relations. In his controversy with Helwys, Robinson maintained that true baptism is that which is administered in a congregation of believers with the outward baptism of water and the inward baptism of the spirit. But he allowed at the same time that even in an apostate Church baptism was a spiritual ordinance. Helwys, too, held that infants could be saved by the redemptive work of Christ though they were incapable of baptism. Their views were

by no means mutually exclusive, and might very well form a basis of reunion between the two Churches concerned.

CHAPTER IV

LAUD AND THE PURITANS

During the closing years of Elizabeth's reign, while the Separatists and Presbyterians were banished or silenced, the Puritans within the Church enjoyed a period of comparative repose. There is evidence that they grew rapidly both in numbers and influence, and when James I came to the throne in 1603 they evidently hoped to obtain some redress of their grievances. The new King, on his arrival in London, was presented with a petition signed by some eight hundred ministers, which set forth their demands in the most moderate terms. This Millenary Petition, as it was called, asked for some relaxation of the laws enforcing objectionable ceremonies; for the suppression of Popish doctrines; for the guarding of the ministry against unworthy men; and for reform of the ecclesiastical courts. At the same time, the petitioners expressly disclaimed any desire to tamper with Episcopacy, or to introduce

a Presbyterian system of Church government. This petition was followed by others, notably by one from the Congregational exiles in Amsterdam. James felt their significance, and it was quite in accordance with his character that he should call a Conference to consider whether there was anything in the settlement of the Church which "might deserve a review and an amendment." This Hampton Court Conference met in January 1604, with the King as President. The Bishops and the Puritans were both well represented, and the latter were allowed to state their case. They obtained little for their pains, however, save a succession of tirades from the King. His summary dealing with them greatly pleased the Bishops, who declared that he spoke with the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, and that there had been no such king since Christ's day. The only practical outcome of the Conference was some slight alterations in the Prayer Book and the preparation of the Authorised Version of the Bible.

It soon became evident that James would be a ready tool in the hands of the Bishops. He was easily flattered, and found it quite appropriate that he should claim divine rights. In consequence all who refused to conform to the order which he represented must suffer. In 1604 the Convocation of Canterbury adopted certain canons ecclesiastical which greatly increased the stringency

of subscription and imposed fresh penalties against nonconformity and schism. Though the Puritans contended that these could not be enforced save by an Act of Parliament, enforced they were, and some three hundred clergy were deprived or silenced. There followed a period of stagnation, when the King and his ecclesiastics had things all their own way. Puritanism was on the decline, and there grew up within the Church a new party which began to insist on the divine right of Episcopacy, to revive Roman ceremonial, and to invest the clergy with the powers of a priesthood. The Lord's table became an altar, and the full doctrine of transubstantiation was taught. This movement began during the archbishopric of Bancroft. In 1610 he was succeeded by Abbot, and for a time the measures against the Puritans were relaxed, and Separatism began once more to hold up its head. Henry Jacob came over from Leyden and organised a Congregational Church in London. At the same time there arose a better feeling between Separatists and Puritans, and a tendency to make common cause under the pressure of persecution. Puritanism began to revive and spread rapidly once more, largely owing to the growth of the belief in the Romanising temper of the King.

With the death of James and the accession of Charles in 1625 the situation again changed. Charles was determined to be head of the

Church in deed as well as in name and to put down all irregularities with a heavy hand. He found in Laud an instrument suited to the occasion, and the two together entered upon a policy that could only end in their entire undoing Laud was a true son of the Catholic revival, and his aim was to carry it to its logical conclusion. He was a devout man to whom his religion was the greatest of realities, and he had the kind of ruthless sincerity that comes very near to fanaticism. In all he did he thought he was doing God service, and even his cruelties could be covered by the motive that prompted them. He fought Puritanism to the death both on doctrinal and political grounds. Himself an Arminian, he detested the Calvinistic theology of the Puritan clergy, and as a believer in the divine right of kings he found natural enemies in all those who stood for religious and civil liberty. He soon made it evident that there was no room for Puritanism in the English Church as he conceived it. The Puritans themselves agreed with him, and began in greater numbers to make common cause with the Separatists. In 1629 and 1630 there were large emigrations of Puritans to the Western world, where they founded settlements in Massachusetts Bay and along the Connecticut River. But that the spirit which led them was not quite that of the earlier Nonconformists they always maintained. This is evidenced by the well-

known farewell words of Francis Higginson : " We will not say, as the Separatists were wont to say at their leaving of England, ' Farewell Babylon, farewell Rome,' but we will say, ' Farewell dear England, farewell the Church of God in England and all the Christian friends there.' We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England, though we cannot but separate from the corruptions in it "

Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, and at once set about preparing a scheme of Church reform. There was no question as to the need for it, and the intentions of the new Archbishop were excellent, if his mode of carrying them out left something to be desired. We read of drunken, immoral and absentee clergy, of churches that were used for fairs and cockfights, of slovenly services and the neglect of preaching. All this Laud very speedily put an end to, and introduced a decency and order into the public services of religion such as had hardly been known before At the same time, however, he went further, and aimed at a uniformity of Catholic ritual that was intensely abhorrent to the whole Puritan section of the Church. The wearing of the surplice, the railing in of the communion table, and the use of the sign of the cross at baptism were demanded of all ministers, and the least irregularity in the observance of the rubric caused the

offender to be arraigned before the Bishop or the Court of High Commission. A regular service of espionage was established throughout the whole country, and contumacy was punished in some cases with fearful severity. The result was, as we have seen, that the best of the Puritan clergy were driven out of the country, and the whole movement for the time was crushed. Laud had his way and obtained the outward uniformity he sought, but it was at a great cost. He made a wilderness and called it peace.

His activities, however, were not confined to the Church. Along with Strafford and Buckingham, he supported the King in the assertion of his divine rights and in his effort to rule and raise taxes without the aid of Parliament. For eleven years a Parliament was dispensed with, and when, in the stress of the agitation against the Ship-money, the King was forced to summon one, he found it to be of a very stubborn temper. The fact is that Laud's religious policy had by this time reacted sharply on the political situation. The Puritan temper was not altogether to be suppressed, and was by no means confined to the clergy. When the latter were silenced or banished their work was carried on by the laity, and naturally enough took a political complexion. At the same time Laud's treatment of the Puritans within the Church had served to revive Separatism once more. Puritans and

Separatists made common cause under persecution, and not a few of the former passed over into the ranks of the latter, and their action was but the logical result of their protest against Laud. Others of them, though they did not go so far as this, showed in their writings a new sympathy with, and understanding of, the Separatist position. The Puritans within the Church were in an anomalous position, and when Laud's policy in Scotland drove them into the arms of the Presbyterians, as we shall see later, they were easily absorbed by them. Meanwhile the Independents grew stronger and more determined, and were preparing themselves for the great part which they were shortly to play. In spite of the vigilance of Laud, new Separatist churches were continually springing up, and formed a training-ground for the men who became the backbone of the Revolution, men like Hampden who raised the revolt against the Ship-money, and Pym and Cromwell in the Long Parliament. Both Puritans and Independents have been blamed for so easily turning their activities into political channels. But the fact is that they had no alternative. They must either abandon their principles altogether, or use the weapons which the folly of the King and his advisers put into their hands. And, in a very real sense, the political struggle was also a religious one. It was for freedom of conscience that men had now to

fight, and the cause is sacred. Like all earthly things, it was mingled with much that was evil, but the best men on the Parliament side in the Civil War never quite lost the sense of the spiritual issues that were at stake.

It may be convenient here to attempt some brief estimate of the Puritans in England—of the work they did and the spirit they represented. Until comparatively recent times we knew little of them save through hostile channels, and it is certain that they are more easily caricatured than understood. But if we judge of them at their best, rather than in the period of their decline, we may say, without fear of contradiction, that they represented the salt of English society in their day, and that the protest they raised against moral and political corruption on the one hand, and religious formalism on the other, was altogether timely. It is a mistake to imagine that they were common and boorish men. Their leaders, as we have seen, were nearly all members of one or other of the Universities, and some of them belonged to the best families in the land. They had a real zeal for education, as witness the broad foundations of the educational system they laid in America, and they were not without appreciation of the fine arts. If proof of these things is required, it can be found in the study of the life of Milton, in the exquisite picture of Colonel Hutchinson drawn by his

wife, and in the family life of John Winthrop as revealed in his letters. Whatever may have been the case at a later period, the Puritans of the early days of the seventeenth century were by no means averse to sport, or to any of the innocent amenities of life. So far from being sour fanatics, they were often skilled in music, and entered with zest into the amusements of country life. If they refused to read the book of sports on Sundays, it was because they believed that it tended directly to contravene the commands of God. For they took their religion seriously and believed in the personal rule of God in human things. They were at once mystics and men of affairs. They practised the habit of prayer and of communion with the unseen, and they derived from it a strength and a wisdom which they were not slow to use. They had a high moral standard, and the abuse of it led, no doubt, to overcensoriousness and a self-righteous spirit. But this was not until they had lost something of the freshness of their faith, and until their spirit had become hardened into a system. It must be remembered that they were fighters all the time. The spirit of protest entered into their blood. Many of them suffered grievously from persecution, and it was almost inevitable that they should become soured and hardened. This, however, was their misfortune rather than their fault. The wonder is that they kept for so

long the purity of their ideals, and that they were ever able to carry them out into action. It is commonly said that they failed, but this is only half the truth. They were in advance of their age, and they moved too quickly and too thoroughly, and in the flood of the reaction that was bound to come, much of their work was destroyed. But their spirit has never been quite lost from English life. The movement they represented, like all such movements, suffered from success. This brought into prominence numbers of self-seeking and interested men who were quite insincere and caused the whole system to fall into discredit. It was a case of *corruptio optimi pessima.* In the time of which we are speaking it was impossible to separate religion from politics, and the Puritans stood for the religious view of a man's political relations and duties. They were the champions of the rights of the people, of religious and civil liberties, and, the best of them, of toleration. They drew both their ideals and their inspiration from the Bible, and they had drunk deep of its spirit. But in thinking that they could retain their position and remain within the Church of England they made a great mistake. Their attitude was utterly uncongenial to the atmosphere of Anglican Catholicism and those of them who had the courage of their convictions and became Separatists were at least logical. In the political

troubles that gathered during the reign of Charles some of them may have found a brief respite, but the ultimate severance from the Church was bound to come. Of the Puritans as a whole we may say with Carlyle, that they represent "the last of all our heroisms. No nobler heroism ever transacted itself on this earth."

The Long Parliament met in November 1640. It was called in order to supply the King with money, the need for which, owing to the Scotch War, had become pressing. But it met in no complaisant mood, and at once set about the business of dealing with grievances. The early debates showed clearly enough the kind of bitter fruit which Laud's policy was beginning to bear. Earlier in the year Convocation had adopted the notorious Book of Canons, and these were at once made the subject of attack. The battle was fought mainly round Canon VI, which imposed what came to be known as the "Et Cetera" oath. It enacted that all clergy, masters of arts, graduates in divinity, law or medicine, all registrars, proctors, actuaries and schoolmasters should swear that they would never consent to alter the government of the Church by archbishops, bishops, deans and archdeacons et cetera "as it now stands established and as by right it ought to stand." This "et cetera" was held to be an attempt to commit men unwittingly to anything which the extreme

Anglicans might wish, and was strongly resented by the Puritans. The debate led to the appointment of a Committee of Twenty-four to prepare a declaration on the state of the kingdom, and the Canons were referred to the Grand Committee on Religion.

Meanwhile, the release and return to London of some of Laud's Puritan prisoners had greatly inflamed religious animosities. As an expression of this, the Root and Branch Petition was drawn up and presented to Parliament in December 1640. It demanded the total abolition of Episcopacy, and was widely supported in London and the home counties. It gave rise to other petitions asking for reform rather than abolition, and the debates in the House showed pretty clearly the widespread objection against the existing ecclesiastical system due to the political power of the Bishops, the Arminian theology, innovations tending to Popery, and the persecution of the Puritans and Non-conformists. This was followed in January by the Ministers' Petition and Remonstrance, setting forth the grievances of the Puritan clergy, and in May by the Root and Branch Bill, described as "an Act for the utter abolishing and taking away of all archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, prebendaries, chanters and canons and all other their under officers." The Bill was read a second

time and referred to a Committee of the whole House, where, after long debate, it remained, being obscured by more pressing political matters. The debates showed, however, the great desire for reform of the Church which now seemed to possess men of all parties, and the strength both in numbers and influence of those who wished this reform to proceed along scriptural and apostolic lines.

It was in the spring of this same year that the King's most trusted adviser, Strafford, was executed. Laud had also been committed to the Tower and was awaiting the same fate. The Scotch War and the rebellion in Ireland had both served to stimulate the distrust of the King which was now very generally felt. While ecclesiastical questions had reached a kind of deadlock political passions were rising, and the divisions which were soon to turn the country into two armed camps were making themselves felt.

In the autumn the House of Commons resolved to draw up a grand Remonstrance on the state of the kingdom, which was intended to be at once a warning to the King and his advisers, and an appeal to the people. The Remonstrance began with an exhaustive review of events during the King's reign. It attributed the grievances of which complaint was made to Papists, Bishops and other evil counsellors of the King. It detailed the hasty dissolution of the

early Parliaments of the reign, the breaches of privilege, the forced loans, the tyranny of the Star Chamber and High Commission, the deeds of Strafford and Laud, and the irregular ways of raising money, as chief causes of the grievance so widely felt. Against these evil deeds of the Court it set the good deeds of Parliament, and referred to the execution of Strafford, the abolition of arbitrary Courts, and of illegal ways of raising funds, the Triennial Act and other reforms. For the future it outlined a programme which included a curtailment of the temporal and political power of the Bishops, the removing of oppressions in religion and the prohibition of "unnecessary ceremonies." It provided for calling a synod of divines to settle these matters, and charged the King to remove from his councils all who would not carry out the wishes of Parliament as thus defined. The debates on the Remonstrance were long and fierce, but it was eventually carried by a small majority. Had it not been carried, Cromwell said "he would have sold all that he had, and never have seen England any more." The Remonstrance was presented to the King, and shortly afterwards was published. It constituted an appeal against the King to the nation. The effect of it was undoubtedly to strengthen the hands of the Puritans. The King as usual temporised, and showed no sign of complying with the terms of Parlia-

ment. His real answer was the decision to impeach the five members, Pym, Hampden, Holles, Haselrige and Strode. While the Lords were debating the legality of the impeachment the King took the law into his own hands. On January 4, 1642, he went to the House of Commons with an armed force to arrest the five members. Pym, who was always well informed about Court affairs, had received warning, and Charles found that his birds had flown. He had committed a fatal blunder, and its failure spelt his ruin. From that time forward, as even Clarendon admits, many of Charles' friends turned against him. War was now inevitable, and the few months that intervened were spent by both parties in trying to find points of advantage. In some respects Parliament was as unscrupulous and unconstitutional in its action as ever the King had been. But it had the excuse of being compelled to carry on the government of the country, and it was hampered by the fear of internal dissensions, which often made bold and high-handed action the best course. It is doubtful, however, whether any other and milder policy would have had the effect of delaying the war for more than a few months. Feeling on both sides had now reached the breaking-point, and when the King set up his standard at Nottingham on August 22, 1642, the Civil War formally began.

The meeting of the Long Parliament marked the opening of a new era in our national history. In the early years of the Parliament political and religious ideals were so inextricably bound up together that it is very difficult to distinguish them. It may be said, indeed, that Pym and his friends had no definite religious and ecclesiastical policy, but that they let themselves be guided by the course of events. Certain it is that many of them, including Cromwell and Milton, were reluctantly driven into their Independency. Opposition to Laud and his policy on the one hand, and dislike for the Presbyterian domination on the other, made it comparatively easy for men of clear vision and spiritual zeal to take their stand with the Separatists. But it would be a mistake to suppose that at the period we have reached there was any organised attempt to change the religion of the country. There was great dislike of Laud's innovations and great resentment against his manner of enforcing them. Both Laud and the King must be acquitted of any intention to restore the power of the Papacy, but their political alliance tended to increase the distrust caused by their ecclesiastical policy. The old fear of Roman Catholicism was by no means dead, and this helped to embitter feeling which was already acute enough. There was exaggeration and intolerance on both sides, and while on both sides, too,

there were men of deep religious feeling and pure patriotism, the rough-and-tumble work of the Revolution tended to give both power and place to those of the more unscrupulous and shallow sort. In an atmosphere of wire-pulling and policy Nonconformists stand to suffer most because of the very height of their ideals. They have the defects of their qualities, and we shall see how in the turmoil of the Civil War and the controversies over the religious settlement of the country these made themselves manifest.

CHAPTER V

PRESBYTERIANS AND INDEPENDENTS

It was the boast of King James that he "knew the stomach" of the Scotch people. Though he made himself supreme both in Church and State, and succeeded in changing Presbytery into Episcopacy, he did so without any open rupture, and he would probably have altered his policy rather than press matters to an extreme. Charles was very different. In religion he was fanatically insistent on his own point of view, and he had no advisers round him in England who could tell him when he had gone too far. His marriage with a Roman Catholic

made him suspect in the eyes of all good Protestants, and the first acts of his reign in Scotland did not reassure them. He alienated the people by insisting on the five Articles of Perth being enforced, viz., kneeling at communion, private communion and baptism in cases of need, the observance of Church festivals and confirmation by Bishops. He alienated the nobles by insisting on the inclusion and precedence of the Bishops and Archbishops in the Privy Council. This bad impression was deepened by the use of the Anglican liturgy at his Coronation in Edinburgh, and the feeling was brought to a head by the attempt to impose the new liturgy on the Scotch Churches. They would have nothing to do with a "Popish-English-Scottish-Mass-Service-Book," reputed to be the work of Laud, and the historic riot in St. Giles', Edinburgh, on the occasion of its first introduction, showed the temper of the people and gave them the signal they desired. With the liturgy went the Book of Canons, which was hated as much for its English as for its Popish tone, and against the two, petitions and protests from all over the country poured in to the Privy Council. Charles refused to withdraw the liturgy, and ordered that all petitions against it were to be regarded as illegal and to be visited with the punishment of treason. The popular answer to this was the renewal of the Covenant made under James. The

basis of it was the so-called "King's Confession," which was a repudiation of the doctrines and forms of Rome, with a list of the confirmatory Acts of Parliament. This was followed by an indictment of the recent innovations and a solemn pledge to defend the Crown and the true faith of the Word of God, and to resist the setting up of Bishops over the Kirk of Scotland. The signing of this Covenant in the Greyfriars' Churchyard at Edinburgh is one of the landmarks of Scottish history. This was in the year 1638, and the General Assembly of the same year roundly condemned the liturgy and deposed the whole bench of Bishops. Two years later the Scottish Parliament ordered every one to sign the Covenant under pain of civil penalties. This amounted to a declaration of war against the King. Charles, however, was not ready, and sent the Marquis of Hamilton as Commissioner to Scotland with orders to gain time, writing to him in the following terms: "I give you leave to flatter them with what hopes you please, so you engage not me against my grounds, and in particular, that you consent neither to the calling of Parliament nor General Assembly till the Covenant be given up: your chief end being now to save time that they may not commit public follies until I be ready to suppress them." There was not much to be done with a King who could write thus, and the Covenanters quite under-

stood the situation. The indictment of the Bishops by the General Assembly was their answer, and meanwhile they, as well as Charles, made preparations for the inevitable resort to force.

The two Bishops' Wars, as they were called, ended in Charles' buying off the Scots with a sum of £200,000 that he might have the more leisure to attend to the pressing affairs in England. But the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 inevitably involved the fortunes of the Covenanters, and for a time both Charles and the Parliament bid for their help. Popular feeling in Scotland, however, was entirely on the side of the Parliament, and resulted in the formation of "the Solemn League and Covenant" of 1643, by which the Parliament secured the help of the Scotch, and the Scotch thought that they had secured the imposition of Presbyterianism on England. The Scotch army was in England for three years and contributed largely to the victory of the Parliamentarians. They captured the King's person and handed him over to leaders of the English army, on the understanding that no injury should be done to him.

Meanwhile the Scottish Commissioners in London had been using all their influence to obtain favour for the Presbyterian system, and not without success. When Bishop Hall published a reply to their arguments in defence of Episcopacy he was answered by

five English clergy — Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen and William Spurstow. Under the pseudonym "Smectymnus" these men published a defence of Presbyterianism which showed how greatly the cause had advanced in England. Some seven hundred other ministers endorsed the work and petitioned Parliament for reform of the Church in a Presbyterian direction. There were not a few sympathisers in the Long Parliament, and when, in July 1643, the Westminster Assembly of Divines was constituted, it contained a very large Presbyterian element. Of the hundred and twenty divines in the Assembly only five were Independents, and a few Episcopalian, the rest being Calvinists or Presbyterians. The appointing ordinance directs that these divines, together with ten peers and twenty commoners, shall "confer and treat among themselves of such matters and things touching and concerning the Liturgy and discipline and government of the Church of England, or the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the same from all false aspersions and misconstructions as shall be proposed to them by both or either of the said Houses of Parliament and no other; and to deliver their opinions or advices of or touching the matters aforesaid, as shall be most agreeable to the word of God to both or either of the said Houses from time to time, in such manner and sort as by either

or both of the said Houses of Parliament shall be required." The same ordinance appointed William Twisse to be Prolocutor of the Assembly, and directed the time and place of its meetings. This is important as showing that the Assembly was never intended to be an independent body, but merely a register of the wishes and opinions of the Parliament. The House of Commons decided from time to time what questions were to be discussed, and thus kept its hand on the whole conduct of the debates Parliament was not disposed to give up the high function of ruling and reforming the Church, and the Assembly, therefore, was merely a deliberative and advisory body. At an early stage in the proceedings the Episcopalian members withdrew, and the Assembly became more and more a register of Presbyterian opinion. The five Independents who belonged to it were men of force and learning, and they took an effective part in the debates ; but they were powerless to do more than state their own opinions. Their names were Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughes and William Bridge, and they exercised an influence much greater than their numbers would seem to warrant. On joining the Assembly they made their own position clear in an " Apologetical Narration " addressed as much to the nation at large as to Parliament, and in some senses an appeal from the Assembly itself. They

informed the Houses of Parliament that they had been driven into exile by the sinful evils and corruptions of the Church, and that, during their exile, they had endeavoured to search out the Apostolic direction and example as to the Primitive Church order. They therefore laid down three principles: (1) that Primitive practice in the Church should be the supreme rule; (2) that present judgment and practice should not be made a binding law for the future, *i.e.* they wished to allow for toleration; (3) that in matters of controversy the safe course was to adopt those practices which the greater part of the Reformed Churches acknowledged to be warrantable, *e.g.* that communion should be restricted to the "faithful" and that extempore prayer should be allowed. The general effect of this was that the Independents claimed to be right as far as their position went, but they were willing to admit that it might be expedient to go farther. In the Assembly itself they had strong allies in Oliver St. John, Sir Harry Vane and Lord Saye and Sele. Of the Presbyterians the leading spirits were the five men who were responsible for "Smectymnus," while there was a third party, who might be called Erastians, led by Coleman and Lightfoot among the divines, and by Selden and Whitelock among laymen. These took the position of Hooker, asserting that every Englishman is necessarily a member of the

Church of England, and that the magistrate is supreme in the Church as in the nation. In addition to these various parties there were the Scottish Commissioners to be reckoned with, and they, of course, took a strongly Presbyterian attitude. They had no votes, but were able to take part in the discussions. They had brought with them from Scotland the text of the Solemn League and Covenant. It was discussed in the Assembly and, after some debate, was sworn to by both Houses of Parliament, and in the following year was imposed on all persons over eighteen years of age. Those who refused it were to be counted malignants. There is no doubt as to the reluctance with which the Independents took this course. For the time being they acquiesced; but it was altogether against their ideas of liberty, and the enforcing of the Covenant became one of their grievances. They discovered in time, as Milton said, that "new presbyter" was but "old priest writ large."

The work of the Assembly began with the revision of the first fifteen Articles of the Church of England and the introduction into them of certain changes in a Calvinistic direction. Instead of completing the work on the Articles, Parliament, in consequence of the agreement with the Scots, then directed the Assembly to deal with the question of Church government and to bring the English system into closer conformity with the

Scottish. In dealing with this matter the Scottish Commissioners claimed the right to be regarded as an independent body, and the Assembly dealt with the points which they suggested after private discussion among themselves. In the debates that followed the bitter antagonism between Independents and Presbyterians became manifest. The Independents were hopelessly outnumbered, and the Assembly reported to Parliament in favour of the Presbyterian system. On questions of discipline Parliament insisted on retaining the final appeal in its own hands, and it became evident that whatever form of Church government might be set up, it would not be allowed to be independent of the State. This was undoubtedly a disappointment to the divines in the Assembly, whether Presbyterian or Independent. In the same way Parliament retained in its own hands the nomination of those who, under the new system, were to be authorised to exercise the power of ordination.

In its Directory for Public Worship the Assembly abolished the Book of Common Prayer and made copious suggestions as to the proper topics of prayer to take its place. When the Directory came to be enforced more than a thousand ministers refused to accept it, and were deprived of their cures. The doctrinal work of the Assembly was comprised in the Longer and Shorter Catechisms, and the Westminster Confession.

On these both Independents and Presbyterians were fairly agreed. They set forth the moderate form of Calvinism which, until comparatively recently, was generally accepted among the Nonconformist Churches. They enforce the Puritan view of the Sabbath and give to the magistrate power to suppress blasphemies and heresies. The chief tangible result of the Assembly was the gift to the Scotch Churches of the Shorter Catechism and the Confession. The attempt to set up Presbyterianism in England was a failure, and indeed was never carried out at all save in one or two counties. The work of the Assembly was too much under the hand of the Parliament, and its deliberations were too largely influenced by political considerations. Milton puts it strongly when he speaks of "Plots and packing worse than those of Trent," but there was no doubt justification for such words.

As the debates in the Assembly proceeded, and as the Presbyterian ascendancy in Parliament grew more pronounced, the dominant party became increasingly intolerant. The time was one of great religious ferment, and gatherings of Anabaptists and other sectaries became frequent. These were regarded by the Scotch with horror and detestation, and their English allies came to share their feelings. In their passion for system and order, and in their desire to impose the Covenant on all and sundry, they

were led to condemn, and to seek to prohibit, all other systems. It was probably as a concession to the temper of the Scotch that in 1645 Parliament ordered the execution of Laud, now an old man and worn by long imprisonment. It was a cruel and unnecessary act of vengeance.

We must now turn to the course of events outside. While Presbyterianism had been gathering strength in the Parliament, Independency was growing in the army, and to some extent in the country at large. The languid prosecution of the war under Essex was put an end to by Cromwell; and his new model army began to encourage the Parliamentarians with the hope of a victory at last. Cromwell, though he signed the solemn League and Covenant, had never been whole hearted in its support, and had followed with the utmost sympathy the struggles and protests of the Independent members in the Westminster Assembly. Indeed, it may be said that the course of the debates there, along with events in Parliament, were responsible for the final conversion of both Cromwell and Milton to Independency of a very pronounced type. In making up his "lovely company" of troopers too, Cromwell discovered that the men on whom he could rely for zeal and morals were, generally speaking, neither Episcopalians nor Presbyterians, but Independents and sectaries of various kinds.

He soon learnt to be indifferent to their religious persuasion, if only they showed themselves honest men and good soldiers. Milton, at the same time, was largely influenced by the parliamentary attitude towards the press, and, in his condemnation of it, took up the position of Independency and toleration in its strongest form. As the new army went from victory to victory, from Marston Moor to Newbury, and from Newbury to Naseby, the opinions it represented assumed a greater importance, and its leader became more and more a man of account.

It was no doubt in the army first that the new spiritual force that had long been gathering among the people made itself felt. Cromwell focussed it, and gave expression to it in the councils of the nation, but the thing was not of his doing, nor of any man's. The new spirit showed itself in some very uncouth forms, but it belongs to the movement of the times, and was the needed reaction against a religion of formalism. What it meant to the milder and more orthodox is well described by Baxter: "We that lived quietly at Coventry did keep to our old principles: we were unfeignedly for King and Parliament; we believed the war was only to save the Parliament and Kingdom from Papists and delinquents and to remove the dividers, that the King might return again to his Parliament, and that no changes

might be made in religion but with his consent. But when I came to the army among Cromwell's soldiers, I found a new face of things which I never dreamt of. The plotting heads were very hot upon that which intimated their intentions to subvert Church and State. Independency and Anabaptistry were most prevalent. Antinomianism and Arminianism were equally distributed." But the men thus described were not mere destructives. If they were bent on pulling down, it was but that they might plant and build. Cromwell, at least, had far-seeing and practical aims. He was what Lord Rosebery has called "that most dangerous combination," a practical man and a mystic. He had no selfish ends to serve, but he did not scruple to advance himself when he thought that in that way he could best advance his cause. He and his army were an instrument in the hands of God. He believed this sincerely, and yet he never yielded to the practical dangers of such a belief. He did not turn the army into an exclusive religious sect, but, as Baxter again testifies, "was for the equal liberty of all." It was in this spirit that he viewed with great misgiving the growing intolerance of the Presbyterian majority. After the storming of Bristol, he wrote to the Speaker of the House of Commons in the following memorable terms: "Sir, they that have been employed in this service know that

faith and prayer obtained this city for you. I do not say ours only, but of the people of God with you and all England over, who have wrestled with God for a blessing in this very thing. Our desires are that God may be glorified by the same spirit of faith by which we ask all our sufficiency and have received it. It is meet that He have all the praise. Presbyterians and Independents, all have the same spirit of faith and prayer; the same presence and answer; they agree here, have no names of difference; pity it is it should be otherwise anywhere! All that believe have the real unity which is most glorious: because inward and spiritual in the body and to the head. For being united in forms, commonly called uniformity, every Christian will for peace-sake study and do as far as conscience will permit. And for brethren, in things of the mind, we look for no compulsion but that of light and reason."

By this time the army had put the Parliament into a fairly secure position. The King was in the hands of the Scotch, and his cause for the time being was lost. Now began the weary struggle between the Presbyterian majority in Parliament and the Independents in the army for the chief place in the councils of the nation. The Presbyterians were all for the maintenance of the monarchy, and were generally on the side of the gentry and the established order. They looked on the army as representing sec-

tarianism and democracy in the most objectionable form. But, though this was true enough, there were men in the army who "knew what they had fought for and loved what they knew," and who refused to be coerced or cajoled into accepting anything less than full religious liberty. Of their leaders Marten alone was a convinced Republican, but he influenced others, and the conduct of the King made them easy converts. The withdrawal of the Scotch and the transference of the King to the custody of Parliament gave the Presbyterians a momentary advantage. They now began to seek a reconciliation with Charles and to concert measures for disbanding the army. If Charles had been wise enough to close with the Presbyterians in anything like a sincere spirit, the war might have had a very different issue, and the monarchy might have been saved. But he was hardly capable of straightforward action. He preferred the subtler method of playing off his opponents the one against the other, with the result that neither could trust him any longer. One cannot here trace out the long and tangled story of the negotiations. Suffice it to say that the army became more and more impatient, and ended by taking command of the situation. It had the advantage of knowing its own mind and being ready to act decisively when the occasion arose. The various regiments had elected representatives

to a General Army Council which became practically a second Parliament, far more democratic and even revolutionary than the one which sat at Westminster. Their military strength was their warrant, and they used it to get possession of the King, and, with him in their hands, to dictate their terms. They were prepared for a religious settlement which would allow the continued use of the Book of Common Prayer, but would not suffer compulsory imposition of the Covenant. Charles played with them until they were driven to give up all hope of him. The negotiations were conducted by Cromwell and Ireton, and it has been generally supposed that the former was all the time working for his own hand. When the King escaped from Hampton Court to the Isle of Wight it is believed that Cromwell connived at the escape for his own purposes. There is really no evidence for this at all, though it is probably true that Cromwell took steps to intercept the King's correspondence, so as to prove without doubt the full measure of his double-dealing. But meanwhile feeling in the army was getting out of hand. The religious spirit there, which found vent in prayer-meetings and field-preachings, became more and more intolerant of the royal delays and deceits on the one hand, and the mild measures proposed by the Presbyterian majority in Parliament on the other. Certain regiments broke out into open mutiny,

demanding the arrears of their pay and an indemnity, and the calling of a new Parliament. Cromwell and Fairfax put down the mutiny with an iron hand, but it was at the price of promising that they would not go any farther in "carnal conferences" with the King. The Parliament, in which Independency now became for the moment predominant, sent an ultimatum to the King which should secure the entire supremacy of the commons. He replied by an agreement with the Scotch in which he promised to establish Presbyterianism, and they to set him free from the sectaries and restore him to London. This practically sealed his fate. The army turned to put down scattered royalist risings and to prevent the incursion of the Scotch. Colonel Pride purged the Parliament of royalist sympathisers, and a military republic was established whose first act was necessarily the trial of the King for treason against his people That he should be condemned was one of the bitter fruits of circumstances, and the times were such that his condemnation could only be followed by his execution.

The Independents were now supreme, and had an irresistible force at their command. They used it with great moderation. Fifteen nobles were banished and had their property confiscated. A few were imprisoned, and only four were put to death. Parliament constituted itself the ruling power in the

State, and England became a commonwealth. But in spite of everything, the reaction immediately began. The army was soon hard at work suppressing scattered royalist risings, and Cromwell himself had to take the field in Scotland. The Scotch repudiated the execution of the King with horror, and were ready at once to avenge him. Cromwell's military genius saved the situation for the time being, but neither he nor any other man could save the Parliament from the legitimate consequences of a hasty and premature policy. In the name of liberty they had acted in a fashion which the most careless observer could not fail to perceive was both arbitrary and despotic. The few men of strong feeling and clear opinions had dominated the majority, and these had been brought to acquiesce in their action by force. That the leaders in the main were conscientious and high-minded men there is no reason to doubt, but they were before their time and their logic was too strictly applied. The Puritan spirit belonged to the elect among the people, and the commons at large would have none of it. Nor was the Puritan spirit altogether unharmed by success. It soon become censorious, and in its efforts to bring about a better state of things denied the very liberty by which it professed to live. The English people were in no sense ready to become Republicans. As Milton says of them, " With a besotted and

degenerate baseness of spirit, except some few who yet retain in them the old English fortitude and love of freedom, imbastardised from the ancient nobleness of their ancestors, (they) are ready to fall flat and give adoration to the image and memory of this man, who hath more put tyranny into an act than any British king before him." However regrettable this may have been, it was perfectly true, and it goes far to explain the fact that the work of the Independents was never more than half done and that the reaction followed so swiftly.

An important landmark in the history of the Free Churches is the Conference of Independents which was held at the Savoy in 1658 with the express purpose of framing an authoritative declaration of their faith and order. The Conference was attended by two hundred delegates, most of whom were laymen, and their agreement was so marked that they regarded it as the special work of the Holy Ghost. True to their historic principles, however, they made it quite plain that they did not intend their confession to be regarded as a binding creed. "Whatever is of force or constraint in matters of this nature, causeth them to degenerate from the name and nature of Confessions; and turns them from being Confessions of Faith into Exactions and Impositions of faith." The doctrinal clauses of the Confession differ little from those of the Westminster Assembly. They show that the

Congregational Churches of the period were thoroughly Calvinistic, and the position is laid down in language of unmistakable strength and clearness. The ecclesiastical clauses give a full and considered statement of the Congregational position as laid down by Browne and Barrow, maintaining the sole rule of Christ over His Church ; its independence of the secular power ; the purity of its membership, and the spiritual autonomy of each individual community. The work of this Conference is a good illustration of the vigorous life of Independency even in times of great political distraction.

CHAPTER VI

THE QUAKERS

The Civil War in England resulted in large measure from the religious enlightenment that had been slowly spreading among the people. To use the familiar phrase of J. R. Green, the English people had become the people of a book, and that book the Bible. They had learnt from it to attach a new importance to the individual, and to revolt against the claim of either Church or ruler to supreme authority over the soul of man. But they had learnt also to judge and measure

things almost too exclusively from the standpoint of religion. The result was not merely a great religious awakening, but a political and social revolution in which religion played a very conspicuous part. The issue was not without serious results for religion itself. The political action that was forced both upon Presbyterians and Independents could not but interfere with their religious witness. Each party in turn set itself up as supreme, and each condescended to use weapons which were far from spiritual in their nature. At the same time the controversies of the hour drove them to make statements of their theological position which tended to assume an ever-increasing degree of rigidity. The Presbyterian would have nothing to do with tolerance. It was "a city of refuge in men's consciences for the devil to fly to." Baxter held that "unlimited toleration was to be abhorred," and Edwards, the great Presbyterian apologist, wrote in his *Gangræna:* "A toleration is the grand design of the devil —it is the most transcendent, catholic and fundamental evil for this kingdom—as original sin is the most fundamental sin." Even the Independents who pleaded for toleration most eloquently, and practised it in very large measure, were not prepared to carry it out in the case of all those who differed from them. It was this stiffening both in doctrine and practice, forced upon some of the best men of the time by the circum-

stances in which they found themselves, that led to a second type of religious revolt that has had very important results for the history of Nonconformity.

All over the country men of the Puritan temper were to be found who deplored and resented what they believed to be the departure from the pure doctrine of the Word on the part of many of their leaders. At the same time they sought for themselves an expression of their religious needs and feelings which should be more in accordance with revealed truth as they conceived it than what they found in many of the formal and stilted services of the Puritans. For it must be admitted that Puritanism itself cannot escape the charge of formality. There is abundant contemporary evidence to show that the Puritan forms of worship often tended to be as stereotyped and hard as anything that was to be found in the Anglican Church. The Puritans themselves also became very intolerant of departures from the recognised order whether in theology or worship, and, as the sequel will show, used their opportunity to crush them with cruel severity. Nevertheless, the new spirit that was abroad in the land would not be crushed, and when the official and leading sections of Nonconformity made concessions to the spirit of order and discipline there were many left in Israel who did not bow the knee to Baal. We read of Seekers, Ranters, Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchy men

and the like, all of whom were openly discontented with the average religious expression of their time, and all of whom were more or less inclined to fanaticism. They gave way to the greatest extravagances, and most of them never reached any other position than that of rather barren protest.

The revolt which they represented, however, was a real thing, and found for itself some lasting forms of expression. It was just at the time that Puritanism was becoming official and more formal that Quakerism began to be. It is a mistake to think that it arose in any way from the sects just mentioned, or that it was in any sense affiliated with them. It did, however, spring from the same spirit of revolt and resentment. It was a fresh protest in favour of the genuine Nonconformist ideal and gave a very clear witness on its behalf.

Like other religious movements, Quakerism was the work of one man. But if we regard George Fox as its founder, it is only in the sense that his vivid religious experience enabled him to focus and give expression to ideas and aspirations which were common to many in his day. No man was ever less conscious than he was of becoming the leader in a great movement. He obeyed the impulses of his own spirit or of the inward light given to him, and if he found many who were ready to receive the word from him and to follow where he led, this he would attribute

as much to the preparedness of the time as to anything which he said or did. He met the prevailing religious temper among the more serious, who were weary of the formalism around them, and sought something deeper and more real than the theological disputations with which the pulpits of the time resounded. The appeal of Fox—a man of keen mother-wit rather than learning—to the witness of God in their souls was what many had been waiting to hear, and they responded to it with eagerness.

Fox was born of a middle-class Puritan family in Leicestershire. He was known as a clean-minded, conscientious young man who when he said a thing meant it. His religious awakening came through being invited to join in a drinking bout by some friends who were "professors," *i.e.* Puritan. The incongruity of the thing struck him, and he spent long hours praying for a better way than that of this religion which was no religion at all. "Then," he says, "at the command of God, on the ninth day of the seventh month 1643 I left my relations and broke off all familiarity of fellowship with old or young." He became a wanderer on the face of the earth, till gradually light broke upon him, and he began to hear the voice of God for himself. He learnt that "to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Jesus Christ," that God did not dwell in

temples made with hands, and that Christ would Himself speak directly to the condition of the troubled soul. He became conscious of the inward presence of the Spirit of God leading him in the way of light and truth. He found here a "secret anchor" of the soul which sustained him amid all temptations and trials and gave him a deep sense of assurance.

To bear witness to these truths and to the peace which they brought with them, became now Fox's life-work. He began the long itinerating ministry which ended only with his death, and in the course of which he endured hardship and persecution with a faith and a confidence that nothing could daunt. He found audiences in meetings of Independents and Baptists, and sometimes even in the parish churches, where it was no unusual thing to allow a stranger to have his say at the close of the regular sermon. As may be supposed, he met with a very mixed reception. One of his earliest experiences was in Manchester, where, he says, "Some were convinced who received the Lord's teaching by which they were confirmed and stood in the truth. But the professors were in a rage, all pleading for sin and imperfection, and could not endure to hear talk of perfection and of a holy and sinless life." It was generally thus. Wherever he went there were those to whom his teaching was like seed falling on prepared ground, while

others found it something entirely subversive of the Christianity they knew and professed. Fox himself was keenly sensitive to the mischief of a religion which, with all its excessive sense of sin and harshness of judgment against sinners, could yet allow so deep a gulf between profession and practice as he had found. In this respect he raised a needed and healthy protest. There is no doubt, however, that the effect of it was marred by certain extravagances. The early Quakers were nothing if not logical and thorough. They believed in the brotherhood of man and in the equality of men before God. They must therefore witness to their belief by refusing to take off their hats to high or low, or to "bow or scrape with the leg" to any one. "Oh the blows, punchings, beatings and imprisonments we underwent for not putting off our hats to men. The bad language and evil usage we received on this account are hard to be expressed, besides the danger we were sometimes in of losing our lives for this matter, and that by the great professors of Christianity, who thereby evinced that they were not true believers." This tendency to judge by the fruits was by no means acceptable in Churches where religion had become formal and had lost much of its savour.

But it was not only in the Churches that Fox made himself felt. As he went up and down the country he dealt fearlessly with the

many social evils he saw around him. He would raise his voice for temperance and moderation in inns and hostels. He pleaded for justice and mercy in courts of law, for fair dealing and honesty in shops and markets. He had all the Puritan dislike of stage plays and dances. In this period both alike were made ministers of evil passions; and though his protest was quite undiscriminating it was certainly not uncalled for.

Nothing gave him more distress than the low moral and spiritual condition of the Churches and ministers. Probably his judgment of them was influenced by his own high standard, but there is no doubt that their formality and worldliness left much to be desired. In many cases, too, in spite of the efforts of Cromwell's Major-Generals and Triers, both drunkenness and immorality were to be found among those entrusted with the cure of souls.

The peace principles for which the Quakers have ever been famous were first inculcated by Fox. He refused to enlist in the Commonwealth army, on the ground that no man was justified in taking the oath of obedience. Further, he says, "I told them I knew from whence all wars arose, even from the lust, according to James' doctrine: and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars." It was also his view of the authority of Christ within which led him utterly to repudiate the rule of the State or its representatives in religious

things. In this respect, as in others, the Quakers carried the Nonconformist principles to logical conclusions from which many of their contemporaries shrank.

The story of Fox and his friends is a long record of labours and persecutions. They were essentially a missionary people. The light of Christ which they knew was, they believed, for all men and they were compelled to make it known. They had against them the whole weight of public opinion backed by the authorities both of Church and State, yet they did not hesitate to give their testimony. They were whipped and imprisoned and many of them were killed, but they persevered. In America they were persecuted with horrible cruelty by Independents and Presbyterians alike. No doubt they were not easy to understand, and the externals of their conduct and worship might readily be assumed to cover all manner of abuses. But this was no excuse for the treatment to which they were subjected. It shows how very far even the Reformed Churches were from the practice of true Christian charity, and how little understanding they had of the fundamental distinction between letter and spirit.

It was their keen sense of this distinction and of the infinitely greater importance of the things of the Spirit which led the Quakers to abandon the sacraments as being needless to a spiritual Christianity. They claimed to have that for which the sacraments stand, in so

real and effective a manner that the outward form was but a useless encumbrance. The assurance of their communion with God was evidenced to them by an inward experience which no ceremony could possibly strengthen. They claimed that Scripture itself supported them in this belief and appealed directly to the teaching of Jesus Christ. This was very high ground to take, and it represents an ideal the influence of which has been felt in all the Churches. But it probably also explains why the tenets of the Friends have not spread more rapidly and have not been more popular. The position is too exalted for average human nature. Men need some mediation of the things of the Spirit, and they find in the outward and visible signs just what they need. It may be said also that the Quakers were not altogether consistent in the statement of their position. Carried to its logical conclusion it would lead to a neglect of Scripture as well as of the sacraments. The inward light to which they appealed was their ultimate authority and was regarded by them as infallible, and yet they made it lead up to an acceptance of the traditional view of the infallibility of Scripture, and used this, in its turn, as an evidence for it. Thus the Spirit was the witness to Scripture, and the Scripture the witness to the Spirit. As Robert Barclay writes: "We do look upon them (*i.e.* the Scriptures) as the only fit out-

ward judge of controversies among Christians : and that whatsoever doctrine is contrary unto their testimony may therefore justly be regarded as false." On the other hand, in defending the Boston martyrs against the charge of heresy, Isaac Pennington wrote: "The Quakers believe that Christ is the eternal life, light, wisdom and power of God which was manifested in that body of flesh which he took of the Virgin, that he is the king, priest and prophet of his people and saveth them from their sins by laying down his life for them and imputing his righteousness to them : yet not without revealing and bringing forth the same righteousness *in* them which he wrought *for* them. And by experience they know that there is no being saved by a belief of his death for them, and of his resurrection, ascension, intercession, etc.; without being brought into true fellowship with him in his death and without feeling his immortal seed of life raised and living in them. And so they disown the faith in Christ's death which is only received and entertained from the relation of the letter of the Scriptures, and stands not in the divine power, and sensible experience of the begotten of God in the heart." These words exactly describe the position of the earlier Quakers, and though it has been somewhat modified in the course of their history. they have never departed from the main principle of an inward light leading to and expressing an inward life and experience

which was the all-sufficient ground of their assurance. They held that the light and life were for all men, and this stirred them to an unusual missionary zeal. They learnt from it the true dignity of human nature, and this drove them to help the poor and degraded and to set free the slave.

But this very principle was also the source of their weakness. They were not always able to meet its lofty claims. Trust in the inward light was sometimes so interpreted as to lead to grave excesses on the one hand, and to a depreciation of the work of the intellect on the other. Fox himself was occasionally betrayed into violence of action and speech, as for instance when he denounced the "bloody city of Lichfield," and more than one of his followers gave way at times to the same spirit. But there was a saving common sense among the Friends which led to a speedy condemnation of action of this kind, and prevented it from ever becoming general, as it did among the Anabaptists. The other defect was more serious, and accounts largely for the stagnation of the Society of Friends during the whole of the eighteenth century. Depreciation of the part which the intellect plays in religion has always been characteristic of mysticism. The inner experience of religion does undoubtedly result in a new illumination, but that illumination is not the whole of knowledge. An interpretation of religion which

may seem to justify men in putting a premium on ignorance can never hold the field for long. That this does not necessarily belong to the Quaker position is evidenced by their recent history. The combination of spiritual insight with intellectual and social passion which they present in modern times is a remarkable and powerful contribution to the religious life of our time.

Fox and the Quakers were pioneers also in respect of their attitude to Church Establishment and to the relation of the Church with the civil power. They carried their protest so far as to object altogether to a paid ministry. That in asserting the general principle of non-interference on the part of the State they were not altogether in advance of their time may be judged from Milton's letter to Cromwell, in which he says: "If you leave the Church to the Church and discreetly rid yourself and the magistracy of that burden, actually half of the whole and at the same time most incompatible with the rest, not allowing two powers of utterly diverse natures, the civil and the ecclesiastical, to commit fornication together, and by their promiscuous and delusive helps apparently to strengthen but in reality to weaken and finally subvert each other: if also you take away all persecuting power from the Church—for persecuting power will never be absent, so long as money, the poison of the Church, the strangler of the truth, shall be extorted

by force from the unwilling as a pay for preaching the gospel—then you will have cast out of the Church those money changers, that truckle not with doves, but with the Dove itself, the Holy Ghost." This is among the earliest and clearest statements of what afterwards became the traditional Nonconformist attitude towards the connection of the Church with the state.

At an early period in his ministry, if it may so be called, Fox found it necessary to gather his followers into "meetings." The first of these was at Sedbergh in Yorkshire in the year 1653, and it was followed by others in other parts of the country. In some cases whole congregations of Independents came over and joined these new Christians who were "gathered in the name of Jesus." In 1656 a General Meeting was established in London to manage the affairs of the new communities, for the supply of preachers and Bibles, the establishment of meetings, and the support of the poor. For the reasons already mentioned the movement, though it began with great enthusiasm, did not maintain this level for long. The Quakers have never attracted the multitude and probably never will, but they have been a most wholesome leaven in the Free Church life of this country, and their influence has been felt far beyond their own borders. Their testimony to religious liberty, and to the spirituality and simplicity of the gospel, has

been more steadily consistent than that of any other religious body.

The story of George Fox carries us some way beyond the period in English history which we had reached in the last chapter, and we must now retrace our steps. The military Republic established on the death of Charles was but short-lived. The situation was eminently one which called for a strong man, and only one man was possible. Cromwell's assumption of power was not the result of a deep-laid plan of his own, but was one of those things which it is now the fashion to call inevitable. We are only concerned here with the general history of the time so far as it affected religion and the Churches. The battle of Dunbar was the end of political Presbyterianism. But the Independents used their triumph mercifully. Presbyterians were allowed their part in the settlement of religion. Some were to be found among the Triers appointed to purge the Churches of unworthy ministers, and the places of these men were filled by Presbyterians and Baptists as well as by Independents. Episcopalians were ejected in large numbers, but, on the whole, they were treated tenderly, and many of them were still allowed to preach. For the first time in the history of this country religious toleration was accepted as a definite policy. The Council of State in 1653 declared that "such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, though differing in judgment

from the doctrine, worship or discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in, the profession of their faith and exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others and to the actual disturbance of the public peace on their part, provided this liberty be not extended to Popery or Prelacy, or to such as under a profession of Christianity hold forth and practise licentiousness." It will be seen that this was but a very limited form of toleration after all. But the exceptions to it were not, as we have seen, rigidly enforced, and were further covered by another article in the declaration which provided that "none be compelled to conform to the public religion by penalties or otherwise." Cromwell himself was all for toleration, and protected even the Quakers. In this respect he was in advance of his contemporaries, and though his Government took his view, there is no doubt that the people at large were not prepared for any real measure of religious liberty. Very few probably agreed with Vane that "the province of the magistrate is this world and man's body: not his conscience or the concerns of eternity."

The religious condition of England during the Commonwealth was one of extreme confusion. Presbyterianism was still the only form of Church government legally recognised; and there were still many Pres-

byterians in Parliament. These were altogether against Cromwell's policy of toleration and were continually trying to force his hand in the direction of closer definitions of Christian belief. It was the necessity of conciliating these men, and at the same time of maintaining his own exalted conception of religious liberty, which caused the Protector to refrain from any final settlement of religion. His second Parliament was even more intolerant than the first, and he had difficulty in holding them back from persecution, as in the case of James Naylor. Meanwhile, in the country at large things were in a state of chaos. Each sect did that which was right in its own eyes, and no one of them seemed to have a more legal position than any other. The civil power kept a watchful eye on them all, especially on the Episcopalians and Papists, but interfered as little as possible. The question of tithes was constantly under discussion but never settled, and nothing effective was done in the way of providing support for the ministry. There is no doubt that in many parishes things were in a most unsatisfactory condition, and sometimes the people were left without any regular spiritual provision at all. Certainly it is true that ministers of scandalous life were summarily dealt with, and there was also a good deal of inquisition into the private lives of individual members of the Churches. It was in connection with

this that the more disagreeable side of Puritanism was seen. The time was favourable to the precisian and the moralist, and they did their work so thoroughly as to create disgust and weariness in many quarters. But these men were the smaller fry of the party and they did not always represent either the policy or the mind of their leaders. Cromwell himself, as we have seen, was always on the side of toleration and was by no means averse to the innocent gaieties of life. In this he was warmly supported by Milton, who was certainly no fanatic, and by his famous chaplain, John Owen. Owen, who along with Goodwin and Howe represented the Independent rule at Oxford, was very far removed from those extreme Puritans who regarded all learning as unspiritual and could describe it as the "smoke from the bottomless pit." When Cromwell was Chancellor he entrusted to Owen the task of reforming the University, where both study and manners had been sadly dissipated by the war. Even Clarendon, with all his hatred of the Puritan régime, admits that he was successful in his task, and that, under his rule, the University reaped a "harvest of extraordinarily good and sound knowledge in all parts of learning." Owen tempered zeal with a wise toleration. He allowed some of the Anglican chaplains to remain undisturbed, and was tender to ancient ceremonies and institutions. Evelyn, in his

Diary speaks of chapels which were permitted to retain their "ancient garb notwithstanding the scrupulositie of the times." Owen also defended the University against the hostility of some of the more fanatical sectaries, and though he maintained a high standard of morals, showed himself an example of wise latitude both in dress and deportment. He stands out among the finest of the Puritan theologians. He was logical, thorough and definite. But at the same time he had a rare spiritual insight, and a religious experience which gives fire and meaning to some of his driest argumentation. In his personal passion for Jesus Christ he stands apart from and above most of his contemporaries. Owen was also largely responsible for Cromwell's efforts at Church settlement and reform, with regard to which Dr. Gardiner says: "With the exception of the condemnation of the use of the Common Prayer, the scheme was in the highest sense good and generous: and it is well to remember that those who strove to reserve the use of the Common Prayer were a political as well as an ecclesiastical party, and that the weight and activity of that party, except so far as it appealed to the indifferent in religion, were out of all proportion to its numbers."

CHAPTER VII

THE RESTORATION

The return of the Stuarts was due to something more than a mere Royalist reaction. Cromwell's work had never been really finished, and the country had not had time to understand and appreciate either his methods or his ideals. Nor had the English people as a whole ever accepted the position of the Independents. The majority of them were still either Anglicans or Presbyterians, and these only waited for the opportunity to assert themselves. After the death of Cromwell their opportunity soon came. There was no one to take the Protector's place. The majority in Parliament was soon dissipated by jealousies and divided counsels. By 1660 the Presbyterians were once again in the ascendancy and began to take their part in the negotiations which ended in the return of Charles. They had no great fear of restoring the monarchy, for the republican sentiment had never taken much hold save among the Independents, Baptists, and minor sects; but they were very anxious that the King should not bring back Episcopacy with him. In order to prevent such a catastrophe they set about completing the establishment of Presbyterianism. But it was to be Presbyterianism of a moderate

sort with some consideration for tender consciences. The Westminster Confession was once more circulated by authority, and the Solemn League and Covenant was ordered to be read in all churches once a year. The policy of the majority as reflected in the remains of the Long Parliament now sitting was to see that, if the King was brought back, it should be under due securities for the maintenance of religion and the public cause as they understood them.

We cannot here detail the long course of intrigue which led to the re-establishment of the monarchy by the new "Convention" Parliament. Suffice it to say that the Presbyterians joined hands with Royalists and Anglicans in the work. They were living in a fool's paradise if they believed that Charles would ever accept their position, and perhaps some of them were willingly deceived. What they could not and would not see, Milton saw clearly enough. He did what he could to stop "the epidemic madness" which had seized on many of his friends, and in his "Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth" he tried to bring them to a better mind. But he was fighting against influences which were too strong for him. People were tired of the Puritan régime, of the excessive strictness with which it had been forced, and of the disputes and differences among those who enforced it. Then, on the other side, Charles was

pliant and plausible. He was ready to grant a free pardon to all who had been against him, save those whom Parliament might wish to punish; and he finally came back under the cover of declarations which were well calculated to satisfy the most timid, if only they could have been believed. "We declare," he wrote, "a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the Kingdom: and we shall be ready to consent to such an Act of Parliament as upon mature deliberation shall be offered to us for the full granting that indulgence." He declared Parliaments to be "so vital a part of the constitution of the Kingdom, and so necessary for the government of it, that we well know neither prince nor people can be in any tolerable degree happy without them: . . . we shall always be as tender of their privileges, and as careful to preserve and protect them as of that which is most near to ourself and most necessary for our own preservation." If Charles had meant these words and had stood by them; the course of English history would have been very different. His failure to do so led, among many other consequences, to the rise of modern Nonconformity.

For the time being England believed Charles' words, and the Breda Declaration

quoted above secured his return. He landed on May 25, and proceeded to London amid a whirl of popular excitement and rejoicing. Receiving the gift of a Bible from the Mayor of Dover the King declared that "it was the thing he loved above all things in the world." At all the early ceremonials and receptions Presbyterian ministers were to the fore, and bishops were kept studiously in the background. Several Presbyterians were appointed Court chaplains, and when they addressed Charles and told him of their desire to tolerate Episcopacy, he spoke them fair and promised his co-operation in securing a religious settlement. It soon became manifest, however, that all this was mere policy. The court chaplains were simply for show. Only four of them ever preached, and none of them for a second time, and, as Baxter somewhat ruefully remarks, none of them ever received a penny of salary.

Meanwhile, however, the Presbyterians took it all seriously enough and went on with their schemes of reconciliation. Though they came to nothing; they are very interesting as showing what the two positions stood for at the period. They asked for measures to secure godly and learned men as ministers, and for some assurance that no persons should be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper unless they had understanding of what they did, and had made profession of Christian faith and obedience. Also they

asked for the better sanctification of the Lord's Day. As to Church government, they are quite willing to accept a modified Episcopacy and a revised Prayer Book, so long as this latter is not made compulsory upon all, and allows the minister to offer free prayer sometimes. They are not sure of the advantages of Ceremonial, and they would at least like to avoid kneeling at the Lord's Supper, bowing at the name of Jesus and towards the altar, the keeping of holy days, the wearing of the surplice, and the making of the sign of the cross in baptism. But the bishops were not in the least disposed to make concessions on points like these. They refused a conference, and returned an evasive reply to the representations of the Presbyterians. They knew that they had only to bide their time. The King, however, recognised that it was still needful to walk warily, and as he was anxious to secure some form of religious settlement which might yet be made to include Roman Catholics, he made proposals for a Declaration of Indulgence. A memorable conference was held at the house of Lord Clarendon, at which six bishops and the leading Presbyterians were present. In the course of the debate, it appeared that the King wished to include Independents and Anabaptists in the Indulgence, and any others whose worship would not disturb the peace. It was at once perceived that this would mean

the toleration of Roman Catholics; and the temper of the meeting showed quite plainly that such a suggestion would not be received with favour. A few days later, on October 25, the Declaration was issued in such form as merely to comprehend Presbyterians who were in favour of a moderate Episcopacy. It accepted the terms which the Presbyterians had originally offered, and added a Commission for the revision of the Liturgy. To show his sincerity the King offered Baxter a bishopric, and other Presbyterian ministers were offered deaneries, while Reynolds actually accepted the see of Norwich. All this, however, was premature. The "Convention" Parliament, though mainly Presbyterian in its leanings, refused to give the Declaration the force of law, and, in doing so, there is evidence that it had the goodwill of the King. There is no doubt, indeed, that he was anxious to conciliate the Puritan party, but he was more anxious to make things easy for the Roman Catholics. Probably, also, he was not unmindful of the fact that when Parliament rejected a measure which he had himself seemed willing to grant, their action would win a certain popularity for him by contrast.

Parliament, however, was preparing to go a great deal further and to throw off the mask of tolerance once for all. The "Convention" Parliament had already restored to their benefices all the clergy ejected during the

Civil War, including those who had been dismissed for incompetency or scandalous living. This was the last Act of Charles' first Parliament. The Cavalier Parliament was far more Royalist in temper, and by it Clarendon was able to carry out his full anti-Puritan policy. It had been excited, too, by an outbreak of Fifth Monarchy men under Venner, for whose extravagances all the non-Episcopalians were made to suffer, however sincerely they repudiated them. Parliament met in May 1661, and the majority lost no time in restoring all its old privileges to the Anglican Church. They repealed the Act of Charles I, which excluded the Bishops from the House of Lords. They passed the Corporations Act, which excluded Nonconformists from all municipal offices, and as the members of Parliament for some boroughs were elected by the Corporations, thus put the election in those cases solely in the hands of members of the Church of England. They restored the ecclesiastical courts, and finally, in May 1662, they passed "An Act for the Uniformity of public prayers and Administration of Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies: and for establishing the form of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in the Church of England." The Act begins with a reference to the efforts after Uniformity made in Elizabeth's reign, and then goes on to give the following interesting description of Nonconformists: "And

yet this notwithstanding, a great number of people in divers parts of this realm following their own Sensuality, and living without knowledge and due fear of God do wilfully and schismatically abstain and refuse to come to their Parish Churches and other public places where Common Prayer, administration of the Sacraments, and Preaching of the Word of God is used upon the Sundays and other days ordained and appointed to be kept and observed as Holy days." As Dr. Dale observes, this definition of Nonconformity still remains unchanged on the Statute book of England.

The Act was drawn with the utmost rigour. It provided that on or before the Feast of St. Bartholomew (August 24) every parson, vicar, or other minister whatsoever should make the following declaration in presence of his congregation: "I do here declare my unfeigned Assent and Consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book entitled The book of Common Prayer." Further, all holders of ecclesiastical positions and all Professors and tutors in Universities were required to subscribe a declaration that they would not take arms against the King or any one commissioned by him, that they would conform to the Liturgy of the Church of England, and that they regarded the Solemn League and Covenant as an unlawful oath. Failure to comply with the Act meant in every case deprivation.

No minister who was not episcopally ordained could be presented to any living, and any minister not so ordained administering the Lord's Supper in a private house or conventicle was liable to a fine of one hundred pounds. It was the passing of this Act that made Nonconformity in this country and that set up the religious cleavage in English society that remains until this day. It pressed as hardly on Presbyterians as on Independents and Baptists. It drove out of the Church of England some two thousand clergy, among whom were many of the best and wisest in the land, such as Baxter and Calamy, Bates, Owen and Howe. By their ejectment the Church was spiritually impoverished, and her position was finally determined in the sacerdotal and sacramental direction. As J. R. Green says: "The Church of England stood from that moment isolated and alone among all the Churches of the Christian world. The Reformation had severed it irretrievably from those which still clung to the obedience of the Papacy. By its rejection of all but Episcopal orders the Act of Uniformity severed it as irretrievably from the general body of the Protestant Churches, whether Lutheran or Reformed. And while thus cut off from all healthy religious communion with the world without, it sank into immobility within. With the expulsion of the Puritan clergy all change, all efforts after reform, all national development, suddenly stopped. From that time to

this the Episcopal Church has been unable to meet the varying spiritual needs of its adherents by any modification of its government or of its worship It stands alone among all the religious bodies of Western Christendom in its failure through two hundred years to devise a single new service of prayer or of praise."

On the other hand, the expulsion of the Puritans proved a great step in the direction of religious liberty. It drove the Presbyterians into the ranks of Nonconformity and created a great and influential body of men who were pledged to the ideal of seeking a free Church in a free State. It also preserved the evangelical spirit to a degree that would have been impossible in a State Church, and it kept alive the fire of a true religious zeal during the dead and difficult times that were to follow.

It is sometimes said that the Puritans had no reason to complain, because they were only treated as they had themselves treated Anglicans in the days of Cromwell. But there was a difference. The ejection during the Civil War was largely a political measure. The clergy who were deprived then were deprived as "malignants," and in some cases as incompetent or vicious. And, even then, they were allowed by the law a fifth part of the value of their benefices for maintenance. The Act of Uniformity, on the other hand, was a measure of religious persecution. It was carried out in direct violation

of the honourable understanding into which the King had entered on his Restoration, and it was enforced with cruel severity. Though it was proposed in Parliament that the ejected clergy should be allowed to retain the fifth part of their benefices, the proposal was rejected by the Commons, and they were turned out into the world to starve. Many of them suffered cruelly, though some were well cared for in the homes of wealthy Puritan families or by the generosity of their congregations. During the next twenty-five years—save, as we shall see, for short periods of indulgence—all forms of Nonconformity were illegal and under the ban. But in spite of this, preaching and worship went on all over the country. In some places the magistrates were not willing to put the law into operation. In others the vigilance of the authorities was more or less easily evaded. It soon became manifest that coercion only served to increase the faith and zeal of the Nonconformists, and the Government was seriously disturbed by the evidence given of their numerical strength by the founding of meetings and churches all over the country. It was in the fear which these facts inspired that there began a long and miserable period of persecution.

At the same time the King still showed himself anxious to use the Nonconformists as an excuse for obtaining some larger measure of religious liberty, such as he might

use in order to secure terms for the Papists. Though he disavowed any such intention, it is now clear that it was only with this end in view that, soon after the passing of the Act of Uniformity, he issued a declaration to the effect that though he was zealous to maintain uniformity, he intended to apply to Parliament for an Act enabling him to exercise his dispensing power on behalf of tender consciences. But neither Parliament nor Church were disposed for any measures of relaxation. This was no doubt partly due to the fear of Popery, which from this time forward became a constant and very potent factor in English politics. But it was also due to the passionate desire of Churchmen to retain the ascendancy which they had won, and to the dread and hatred with which Puritanism was regarded by the court party. The pages of Pepys' *Diary* make it very clear that the moral licence of the Restoration was only too often condoned by the obsequious preachers of the State Church, and this was in marked contrast to the habitual and recognised attitude of the Puritans.

In 1664 the Conventicle Act was passed. It provided that any person over sixteen years of age who attended a Nonconformist service, at which more than five persons were present, should be liable to a fine of five pounds or three months' imprisonment for the first offence. For the second offence

the penalty was doubled. For the third offence the fine was to be one hundred pounds, or, in default, transportation to one of His Majesty's foreign plantations for a period of seven years. The vindictive character of the measure is shown by the fact that Virginia and New England were especially exempted from the list of foreign plantations contemplated, because in them banished Nonconformists might easily have found friends, and further by the fact that the cost of transportation was to be met by distraint on the goods of the criminal. In the following year the Five Mile Act was passed. It provided that all persons in holy orders, or "pretending to be in holy orders," who had not submitted to the provisions of the Act of Uniformity should swear that they would not take up arms against the King, or attempt any alteration in the government either of Church or State. Failing this they were not allowed to come, except on a journey; within five miles of any city, town, or borough, or any place where they had held cures or conducted services. The penalty for disobedience was forty pounds. The effect of this Act was not only to prevent Nonconformist ministers from influencing others, even by private social intercourse, it deprived them also of almost all means of livelihood, especially by keeping schools and academies. By this time the cup of their bitterness was full.

As Baxter says: "Many of the ministers being afraid to lay down their ministry after they had been ordained to it, preached to such as would hear them in fields and private houses, till they were apprehended and cast into jail, where many of them perished." During the plague and after the great fire, when Parliament was meeting at Oxford and passing measures against them, many of the Nonconformist ministers returned to London and took the place of State ministers who had fled from the post of duty, in succouring the sick and homeless people. It was at this time that Baxter was imprisoned, and that Bunyan spent twelve years in Bedford Jail. Milton, now old and blind, had influence enough to escape the storm, and *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* remain as monuments of his mental suffering and disappointment. While the *Pilgrim's Progress* has given immortality to the spiritual side of Puritanism, there remain also other books of the period, which witness to its religious fervour and reality, and to the hold it had over the minds of the people. Such are Joseph Alleine's *Call to the Unconverted*, Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest* and *Now or Never*, John Howe's *The Living Temple*, and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. It is often said that the Puritans had no definite or formulated theology, but they had what was perhaps better, a religious

insight and experience which found vivid expression for itself under very varied, if sometimes very uncouth, forms. So far from hindering this expression, suffering and persecution but gave to it edge and point.

With the fall of Clarendon in 1667, further efforts were made to comprehend the Presbyterians in the Established Church by relaxing the terms of conformity, but nothing came of them. In the following year the first Conventicle Act expired, and, for a time, the Nonconformists breathed more freely. They used their brief respite to good purpose, and their activity caused no little alarm to the Church party. In consequence of it, Sheldon, the Archbishop of Canterbury, persuaded the King to issue a proclamation enforcing the various Acts against Nonconformity. Parliament thanked the King for his proclamation, and proceeded to pass the second Conventicle Act (1670), which, though less severe in its penalties, was framed so as to be much more effective than the first. It contained a remarkable clause, providing that "if any doubt should arise concerning the meaning of any part of this Act, it was to be determined in the sense that was the most contrary to Conventicles, it being the intention of the House to repress them in the most effectual manner possible." For the moment, however, this intention was frustrated. Charles was occupied with the Dutch War, and had become a pensioner

of the King of France. His foreign policy was highly unpopular, and he felt that he could not afford to alienate any large section of his people. He resolved, therefore, to suspend the penal laws against the Nonconformists, and in 1671–72 issued his Declaration of Indulgence. The effect of this was that a certain number of places and persons might be licensed for the carrying on of worship in other than the Anglican way. Even Roman Catholics were exempted from penalties, though licences for places of worship were not granted to them. Some of the Presbyterians scrupled to accept this favour, believing that they had by right a place in the National Church. Others of them had no hesitation in applying for licences, and in this they were joined by large numbers of Independents, or Congregationalists,—as they now began to be called,—Baptists, and Quakers. Within the first ten months of the Indulgence some two thousand five hundred licences were granted. Full information in regard to them has recently been supplied by the industry of the Rev. G. Lyon Turner in his *Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence*. The records consist of the Episcopal returns for the years 1665, 1669, and 1676, showing the number of conventicles in the various dioceses, the numbers of their adherents, and the names of their leaders, and also of a large number of documents

connected with the issue of licences under the Declaration of Indulgences in 1672. These most interesting volumes throw a flood of light on the condition of Nonconformity in England at the period indicated. The sects mentioned are Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists or Catabaptists or Antipædobaptists, and Quakers. The numbers given are surprisingly large, and entries like "numerous" or "very numerous" are more common, where no figures are given, than "small" or "very small." The meetings are mostly held in private houses or rooms, and the status of the congregations is variously described as "mean," "mostly women," "excommunicate persons," "vulgar," "the middle sort," "farmers and tradesmen," "of good estates and quality," and "all sorts." From these returns, and from those of the applications for licences, we may conclude that in most parishes were to be found a number of Nonconformists fairly representative of the general population, and often led by men of ability and force, many of these being ejected clergy. For example, in the Diocese of Exeter, we have the following report: "Mr. Robert Collins, some tymes Rector of Tallaton, and eiected for inconformity, lives now in Ottery St. Mary in his owne house neare the Church, where he keeps conventicles frequently but especially upon Sundayes in tyme of divine Service to the Scandall of

many: but for want of a Justice of Peace, the Churchwardens or Constables dare not enter the house to take them, and their privacy is such that they cannot yet prove enough ag^st^ them to convict them by Lawe: I am told he was never at Church in ye time of Common prayer since the act of Conformity and is a very pertinacious Nonconformist."

The following letter is a typical application for a licence addressed to the commissioner for licences, Sir Joseph Williamson :—

"Worthy Sir,—I formerly have been a preacher of the Word but afterwards my ministry was laid aside partly by reason of some sicknesse that then lay upon me and ptly by reason of some things in use wh I cold not with peace of conscience unto. As for my judgement it is only Scripturall and I doe accord with Ministers either episcopall presbiteriall or independant so farre as Scripture and Scripturall sense goeth and as the lord hath enlightened my understanding. I have not preached either in publicke or in private since the nonconforming ministers were laid aside yet have heard altogether in publicke: I haveing read his Majesties gracious declaration humbly crave that according to it I may be alowed to preach the gospel of Christ in the pish (parish) of Thaxted in the County of Essex in a certaine place or house open and free for all commers

where I shall endeavour to my utmost power to dispence ye word of grace faithfully to the peoples soules without medling with anye State affaires and shall be thankful to his Majesty and to those that shall alow me to be imployed in so good a worke. So subscribes

"Henry Coleman, M^r^ of Arts of the Universitye of Cambridge, and an ancient preacher of the gospell of Christ. Dwelling in the pish of Much Eiston in the County of Essex, May 14th in the yeare of or Lord 1672."

The Indulgence, however, was but short-lived. Parliament counted it no part of the King's Prerogative to make such a declaration, and resolved "That Penal statutes, in matters ecclesiastical, cannot be suspended but by Act of Parliament." Even some Presbyterians, to their great honour, were against the King in this matter, and as one of their spokesmen said, "They had rather still go without their desired liberty than have it in a way that would prove so detrimental to the nation." Charles fought hard for his prerogative, but when the Commons held up a money bill he was compelled to yield, and the licences were called in.

During the remaining years of the reign of Charles various other schemes were set on foot for comprehending Nonconformists within the Church, but without any success. The discovery of the supposed Popish plot under Titus Oates in 1678 greatly embittered feel-

ing and made the Commons more jealous of doing anything to further the policy of the King. An Act to exclude the Duke of York, as a Roman Catholic, from the succession was only defeated by the House of Lords and with the help of the Bishops. The Nonconformists were in an evil case and became the ready prey of any one who cared to put the law in force against them. The prisons were full of them, and the Quakers especially suffered. It was at this time that William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania for his distressed co-religionists. Dark and evil as the reign of Charles II was, however, it showed a real advance in the direction of civil and religious liberty. The two historic parties, Whig and Tory, began then to be distinguished, and the former was identified with the policy of freedom and toleration. The Nonconformists did not suffer in vain. Though most of them had no wish to meddle in State affairs, but simply to preach the gospel without let or hindrance, their protest had political consequences which neither they nor the country could avoid.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVOLUTION

It is reported that Charles II once said to his brother, James, Duke of York, "They will never get rid of me in order to make you King"; and probably no English king ever came to the throne with less goodwill among his subjects than James II. Charles had died a Roman Catholic, and James was determined to live as one. Though the Commons accepted his promise to maintain the Government, both in Church and State, as by law established, and regarded him as more reliable than his brother, there were grave misgivings in the country which were soon to be justified. No doubt the opportunity for Catholic reaction was less than it had been. The closing years of Charles' reign had brought forth the Habeas Corpus Act, which for ever put an end to arbitrary imprisonments in this country. Something like freedom of the Press was now established, and this has always acted as a curb on tyranny. James, however, made the best of such opportunities as he had. The Protestant rebellions under Argyll in Scotland and under Monmouth in the South played into his hands. They were made a reason for enforcing the penal laws against Nonconformists. James was cruel by nature, and in Judge Jeffreys he

found a fit instrument for his work. His Bloody Assize in the West Country has left a bitter memory behind it. One hundred and fifty rebels were hanged, seven hundred were sold into slavery, and many more were whipped and imprisoned. Even women were among those put to death, and their trial was in many cases but a travesty of justice. The quality of Jeffreys is illustrated by the fact that he meted out much the same treatment to Titus Oates and to Richard Baxter. Baxter's trial has often been described, and was typical of what went on in Jeffreys' court. "This is an old rogue, a schismatical knave, a hypocritical villain," shouted the judge. "He hates the Liturgy: he would have nothing but long-winded cant without the book." The judge was all the while more abusive than any prosecuting counsel, and an obsequious jury found the prisoner guilty after the briefest consultation. Baxter was fined and imprisoned, and Jeffreys was with difficulty prevented from having him whipped at the cart's tail. All this created an immense revulsion of feeling in the country. It was known that Jeffreys had his orders direct from the King and that the latter was resolved on a policy of stern repression. But the wiser among his counsellors knew by this time that Nonconformity was not to be repressed by persecution, and James himself learnt the lesson when it was too late.

Scotland, meanwhile, was suffering even more than the South. The Covenanters were not Nonconformists in the sense that the English were. They represented a State Church and believed in it, but they believed also in religious liberty, and they fought and died for liberty to worship God in their own fashion, in a way that has won them an everlasting name. Under Graham of Claverhouse they were subjected to the cruelest treatment. They were harried by his dragoons like wild beasts, and compelled to take refuge in the hills, and carry on their worship in dens and caves of the earth. Men, women and children alike were tortured and put to death, and again it was all carried on at the express orders of the King.

There can be little doubt that while individuals suffered grievously under this persecution, the general cause of Protestantism, and especially of Nonconformity, stood to gain. The constancy of the sufferers made its impression, and we read of ministers who left the Establishment because it was a persecuting Church, and of soldiers who threw up their commissions to join the ranks of the Nonconformists. Though the land was full of informers, and the conventicles were regarded as retreats of criminals, worship was carried on, and the cause prospered. Fear of Romanism had something to do with it, and the outbreak of persecution against

the Huguenots in France showed England that there was still worse in store for her under a Roman régime. At the same time the thousands of French refugees who came over to this country swelled the ranks and stiffened the resolution of the English Protestants.

But James soon showed his hand in other ways than by urging persecution. In spite of the Test Act and in defiance of Parliament, he had Roman Catholics appointed to all the high offices of State. He established them in the Universities by force and in the teeth of public opinion. In order the more effectually to deal with refractory Churchmen he set up again the Court of High Commission, and that he might overawe the people he greatly increased the standing army. But even Churchmen and Tories were made of sterner stuff than he had thought Though Royalist to the core, they would not brook tyranny, and they were in no mood to risk the ascendancy of Protestantism. The Churches rang with denunciations of Rome, and pamphlets and books on Protestantism poured from the Press. James could not but see that he had undertaken more than he could carry out, and, for a time at least, he turned from the policy of repression and violence to one of indulgence. His first act of indulgence was to liberate some fifteen hundred Quakers from prison. This enabled him to grant

a similar boon to some hundreds of Roman Catholics, but it had other reasons. The Quakers were very numerous, and they were also a peaceable folk who were free of all complicity in the actions of the Commonwealth against the Stuarts. They were, therefore, considered safe subjects for indulgence, and would be likely to gain the King some sort of popularity. Then, again, William Penn had returned from America and had considerable influence at Court. This has not been counted to him for righteousness, but that he should use his influence to obtain help for his own people is at least to his credit. But the indulgence was not to stop here. Two years later, in 1687, the King issued a Declaration of Indulgence in which he pledged himself to protect and maintain the clergy of the Church of England in the free exercise of their religion, and to suspend all laws inflicting penalties for Nonconformity. At the same time he promised to abolish the Test Acts, and to give a free pardon to all Nonconformists and recusants. This again was a double-edged boon, and it is greatly to the credit of the leading Nonconformists that they were not taken in by it. Some few addresses of thanks were presented to the King, but the London ministers, under the guidance of John Howe and Daniel Williams, refused to support a policy which approved the dispensing power of the King and threatened

the foundations of public liberty. There was much discussion of the subject all over the country, and leading Churchmen like the Marquis of Halifax urged Nonconformists to stand by the side of the Church in defending the Protestant faith, and not to be led astray by specious promises of relief. They hardly needed such admonitions, and none rejoiced more than the Nonconformists to find that there were many Churchmen who were as little favourable to the King's policy as they were themselves. When the Declaration was ordered to be read in the churches seven of the bishops refused. This was, they said, not from any want of duty or obedience to the King, not from any want of tenderness to Dissenters, but because the Declaration was founded upon such a dispensing power as hath been often declared illegal in Parliament. The King sent the bishops to the Tower and put them on trial for a seditious libel against himself and his government. But the jury acquitted them amid the most rapturous rejoicings of the whole country. For the moment Churchmen and Nonconformists were drawn very closely together, and once more proposals were made for reconciling the more moderate Nonconformists with the Establishment. There was to be a revision of the liturgy with omission of some "ceremonies," and the enforcement of discipline, and Archbishop Sancroft urged on his clergy "a very

tender regard to our brethren the Protestant Dissenters."

All this time certain of the Protestant notables had been carrying on negotiations with William of Orange, and in 1688 a formal invitation was sent to him to avert by force of arms the dangers which threatened the religion and liberties of the nation. William responded by setting sail for England with a large Dutch force, having inscribed on his banners, "The Protestant religion and liberties of England." James tried to forestall his coming by going back on all his demands and promising full freedom and security to the Protestant faith. But it was too late. After some days of hesitation the country rose to meet William and acclaimed him King and deliverer. Just at the end of the year he entered London in state amid every sign of popular enthusiasm. A week later James fled from the country and so relieved the new government of the only obstacle to a peaceful settlement.

The task that confronted William III was an extremely difficult one. He was a Protestant and a Calvinist with a deep hatred for Roman Catholicism, and as deep a distrust of the ecclesiastical leanings of the High Churchmen. His sympathies were all with the Nonconformists, especially with the Presbyterians. He was "never of that mind that violence was suited to the advancing of true religion." Yet he came to be

head of a Church which had little or no sympathy with his own position. Born statesman that he was, he soon discovered that he must maintain good relations with the heads of the Anglican Church however much he might differ from them, and he was content that his policy should be shaped by the general interests of the country rather than by his private religious views. He firmly resisted the suggestion that he should be Regent, and refused to play the lacquey to his wife. When he and Mary were acknowledged as joint sovereigns, the sole administration lay with him. At the same time he willingly accepted the Declaration of Rights which established the position of Parliament and denied the right of the King to suspend laws or raise money without its consent. It also secured the right of the subject to petition, to the free choice of Parliamentary representatives and to a pure administration of justice. It bound the King to maintain the Protestant faith and liberty of religion for all Protestants. This was the beginning of constitutional monarchy as we know it to-day. The King became the creature of an Act of Parliament. Parliament secured now the absolute control of finance, and the King's grant of revenue became a matter of annual supply. In the same way Parliament secured control of the army, by making the powers of discipline and the granting of supplies matter of an

annual Act. Thus the regular assembly of Parliament became necessary in order to carry on the King's government. Much of this was not at all to William's taste; but after a single outbreak of anger he had the grace to acquiesce, and his far-sighted complaisance helped to lay the foundations of the new order strong and deep.

The first measure of William's reign affecting religion was the Toleration Act. Nonconformists and Churchmen, no longer united by opposition to a common foe, soon fell apart; and measures for comprehension came to nothing. The Toleration Act of 1689 showed very clearly the relations in which the two parties were to stand towards each other. It was really an act of condescension towards Nonconformity on the part of the dominant Church. It stereotyped the position of inferiority and sufferance which the Nonconformists were henceforth expected to maintain: But at the same time it established freedom of worship, and by denying to the Nonconformists any part or lot in the Establishment, it left them free to work out their own salvation, and to play their part in their own way in the religious life of the country. It also threw Nonconformists into the arms of the political party which stood for freedom and progress, just as it tended to stereotype the Church and identify it with the forces of conservatism. For the moment, too, the Church of England had difficulties of her

own to face. Many of the clergy had given only a half-hearted assent to the Revolution. They still believed in the doctrine of the divine right of kings, and regarded it as an outrage that the oath of allegiance to the new sovereigns should be exacted from them. Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, with certain other bishops and a large number of clergy, refused altogether to take the oath and regarded those who took it as schismatics. They were deprived by Act of Parliament, but they looked upon themselves and those who acted with them as the only members of the true Church of England, and behaved accordingly. There is no doubt that these Nonjurors, as they were called, had the sympathy of the whole of the High Church party, even of those among them who took the oath. Their attitude compelled William to find Church leaders among the Whigs and Latitudinarians, and these again were alienated from the great body of the clergy. Such a severance greatly weakened the Church and was the cause of internal strife which lasted for many years. It has to be reckoned with in estimating the causes of the growth of Nonconformity.

The Toleration Act was a very restricted boon. It suffered Nonconformists to meet and worship, but they were still compelled to subscribe to the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, and to pay tithe and Church rates. It was accepted not without

misgivings. Baxter, for one, scrupled at signing the Athanasian Creed, declaring that he only believed in its positive teaching and not in the damnatory clauses. At the same time he put his own interpretation on the Articles and would only accept them as he was allowed to do so. He was not without sympathisers; and from this time forward we can trace the growth of the movement towards complete intellectual freedom in matters of faith. Soon after the passing of the Act appeared John Locke's letters on Toleration, in which the true Nonconformist attitude on the relations of Church and State was set forth in most complete and masterly fashion. Locke had been trained among Independents and had imbibed much of their spirit. To him "all the life and power of religion consist in the inward persuasion of the mind: and faith is not faith without believing. The civil magistrate's power consists only in outward force, and it is impossible for the understanding to be compelled to the belief of anything by such a force. Even if the rigour of the law could change men's opinions it would not help to the salvation of their souls."

Inadequate as it was, the Toleration Act produced immediate results. Nonconformity began to breathe freely and spread with great rapidity. In the twelve closing years of the seventeenth century two thousand four hundred and eighteen Dissenting meeting-

houses were licensed for public worship. These were attended by people of all classes and, in the towns at least, the Nonconformists were among the most substantial members of the community. They began to open academies for the education of their ministers, and schools for the education of the children of the poor. Even in the reign of James, one such school was founded in Southwark "for the instruction of children in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and the girls in sewing and knitting and furnishing them with books for their instruction in these arts, and with Testaments, catechisms, and Bibles." This school has had many imitators, and is a standing witness to the interest in things educational which has always been a characteristic of Nonconformists.

They were not, however, altogether free from disabilities. The Test and Corporation Acts were still in force, and it was impossible to hold any civil office without first taking the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. This led to the practice of occasional conformity on the part of some Dissenters. Of these not a few, including some leading ministers like Howe, conformed at stated times in order that they might still keep up some connection with the Church of their Fathers. But others regarded the rite as a mere form necessary to the maintenance of their position as English citizens.

It became to them "an office key, a picklock to a place." By many Nonconformists this practice was roundly condemned, and the subject was a matter of sharp controversy. It brought forth Daniel Defoe's pamphlet on *The Practice of Occasional Conformity*, in which it was argued that if occasional conformity was allowable, then Dissent was a sin; but if Dissent was right, then conformity, occasional or otherwise, was the sin. The sharpness with which this dilemma is stated illustrates the temper of the times, and the spirit of a toleration which was equally stiff on both sides and had no room for the charity that thinketh no evil.

It will be convenient at this point to sum up briefly and in general terms the position of the various Nonconformist bodies under the first few years of the Toleration Act, and to discover how much truth there was in the opinion expressed by Bishop Burnet that Dissent was likely to die out within the generation then existing. The statement was only warranted by the fact that Nonconformists had flourished under persecution, and that many of the men who had led them in the days of trial were now old or dead. The Congregationalists especially had suffered in this way. Their leading ministers were Matthew Mead of Stepney, a mild and laborious man, Isaac Chauncey of Mark Lane, and Stephen Lobb, a Jacobite Dissenter, of Fetter Lane. The Presbyterians, on the

other hand, had nearly all their old leaders living. Baxter was drawing near the end of his pilgrimage, but he still counted. Howe was in his sixtieth year, a most moderate Presbyterian and the friend of all the sects as well as of the Established Church. With him stood the silver-tongued Bates, and Samuel Annesley, Matthew Sylvester, and Dr. Daniel Williams. These represented the great preachers of London, and they had brethren in other parts of the country who were not unworthy of them. Under the influence of Baxter and Howe on the one side, and of Mead on the other, proposals were now made for union between the Congregational and Presbyterian bodies. Certain articles of agreement were drawn up and assented to by the ministers in and about London. The articles provide an interesting amalgam of the two polities: The right of each congregation to choose its own officers is recognised, as also is the right of ministers and elders to rule and govern with the consent of the brotherhood. The ministry is to be elected by the Churches, and it is "ordinarily requisite" that the pastors of the neighbouring Churches shall concur in the election. Synods are to be called for advice and consultation, and Churches should take note of their decisions. The question of ruling elders is left open, and so far as theology is concerned the Divine origin of the Scriptures, and the doctrinal

parts of the Articles, or of the Westminster or Savoy Confessions, are all that need be required of any Church. Though the Churches were not consulted in the negotiations, this scheme appears to have been accepted without question in many parts of the country. But the reconciliation was as premature as it was incomplete. Some Congregational ministers never accepted it, and disputes on doctrinal points soon broke out. There was no real theological unity between Independents and Presbyterians. The former were Calvinists of a much sterner type than the latter, and the two bodies were not prepared as yet to dwell together in peace. The scheme came to nothing, though the long-drawn-out controversy was not allowed to hinder friendly relations. The denominational distinctions tended from this time forward to become more fixed, and each of these great bodies had its own history and played its part in the religious life of the country.

The Baptists were considerably weaker than either the Presbyterians or the Congregationalists. They suffered from internal divisions, the Particular Baptists being extreme Calvinists, while the General Baptists were much more liberal in their views. As might be expected from their history the Baptists were strongly opposed to a State Church and to the use of the secular power to support or antagonise religion. They

believed that Christ's "spiritual Kingdom, which is His Church here on earth, ought not to be set up or forced either by the sword or any civil law whatsoever, but by the preaching of the Gospel, which is the sword of the Spirit and the word of God." At the period with which we are dealing, the Baptists did not make very rapid progress. They held more than one Assembly in order to discuss the condition of their denomination, which even they themselves could not regard as satisfactory.

The Quakers, on the other hand, were still active and progressive. In some respects they were the most important of the Nonconformist bodies, and were the subjects of special legislation, as, *e.g.*, in regard to the taking of the oath, on more than one occasion. George Fox and Barclay were still living. Penn had as great a political influence as any man of his time, and George Whitehead was one of the most effective preachers of the day. Many new Quaker meeting-places were opened after the passing of the Toleration Act, and those who attended them were the salt of Nonconformity.

This same period also saw the beginnings of a definite movement towards Socinianism. Attacks on Trinitarian doctrine were not infrequent both inside the Established Church and from without it. They gave rise to a wordy warfare in sermons and pamphlets, and Tillotson was driven to admit of the Socinians

that "They are a pattern of the fair way of disputing: they argue without passion, with decency, dignity, clearness, and gravity." As much could hardly be said of those on the other side. There was no toleration for Socinians. To clergy and ministers alike they were no better than "impious blasphemers," and the House of Commons readily passed an Act prohibiting the publication of attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity, and visiting those who offended in this matter with a kind of outlawry.

As regards the relations between the various denominations there is not much to be said. The Quakers and Baptists stood aloof from all intercourse, either with one another or with the other Churches. The Congregationalists and Presbyterians, as we have seen, were accustomed to act together, and without any formal union easily combined when their common interests required it. As regards the Church of England, the Presbyterians were the most friendly, and hesitated to take up any attitude which should emphasise their separation from the national Church. It was among them that the practice of occasional conformity was most prevalent. On the other hand, neither Quakers nor Baptists held any religious communion with members of the Established Church, and some of the Baptists went so far as to prohibit attendance at Anglican places of worship, and to forbid social intercourse and inter-

marriage with Anglicans. The attitude of the Congregationalists was between these two extremes. They succeeded in distinguishing more clearly than some of their contemporaries between the Church as a religous institution and as a State establishment—a distinction which later on became of vital importance.

As the separation between Whigs and Tories in politics became more marked the Nonconformists naturally identified themselves with the former, and, as naturally, they suffered from the Tory reaction in the latter days of William's reign. At this period there was a very real division between the bishops and the great body of the clergy. The bishops were, generally speaking, Whig, and prepared to accept the revolution and all its consequences. They were favourable to Nonconformists and not disposed to make too much of the divisions which separated these from the Church. To a man like Bishop Burnet, with his masculine common sense, the causes of division were very small things indeed, beside the great points in which he regarded all Christians as agreed. The great bulk of the clergy, on the other hand, had more sympathy with the nonjurors than with the bishops. They made no secret of their Jacobite leanings on the one hand, and of their hatred of Dissenters on the other. It was under the guidance of such men that Convocation began to assert

itself and that the Episcopal and sacerdotal positions were pressed to the extremes with which we are familiar to-day. High Churchmen of this type were sworn enemies of the toleration policy, and received the news of William's death in 1702 with every sign of exultation.

CHAPTER IX

REACTION AND DECLINE

When Anne came to the throne in 1702 the Tory reaction was in full flood. The Queen herself avowed the strongest High Church principles and had no love for Dissenters. When the three denominations, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, united to present her with a loyal address on her accession she received them in silence, and, in her first speeches from the throne, while promising to maintain the Act of Toleration, she spoke of her interest in the religion of the Church of England, and of her determination to countenance those who were zealous to support it. She speedily rid herself of the Whig leaders of William's time, and supplied their places with men of Tory sympathies like Marlborough, Godolphin, and Harley. In all this the High Church

party saw their opportunity and set about an agitation, first for the suppression of the Dissenting Academies, and secondly for the repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act. They found a ready tool in Henry Sacheverell, a bigoted and unscrupulous clergyman, who was past master in the arts of the demagogue, and, by the violence of his preaching, easily able to inflame the popular feeling against the Nonconformists. He denounced the Academies as being a danger to Church and State, "fountains of lewdness from which were spawned all descriptions of heterodox, lewd, and atheistical books." In this campaign he was well seconded by Samuel Wesley, the father of John Wesley, who wrote a "Letter from a country Divine concerning the education of Dissenters in their private Academies in several parts of the nation." Wesley almost outdid Sacheverell in the violence of his abuse, and the controversy to which his writings gave rise shows clearly enough that these hated Academies had reached such a position of influence and usefulness as to be feared with some reason by those who objected to Dissent. It was even urged that they "endangered the success of the two ancient Universities," in that they intercepted many who would otherwise have sought their education there. Such reproaches came well from those who at the same time taunted Dissenters with their

ignorance. As one of the replies to Wesley said, "He excludes them from the fountain of learning, nor will he allow them to drink water out of their own cisterns. He would have them punished for using the means of knowledge and yet damns them for the prejudices of ignorance." The controversy is interesting as opening up the question of the relation of Nonconformists to the Universities, the source of a grievance which remained unredressed for many years.

Among the host of writers which these disputes brought forth one of the most vigorous and effective was Defoe, though he was by no means regarded with favour by those whose cause he espoused. It was in answer to Sacheverell that he wrote his *Shortest Way with Dissenters*, a satire on the Sacheverell manner, in which he suggested that lay Nonconformists should be banished and their ministers hanged. This was taken quite seriously by the High Church party with whose desires it was altogether in agreement, and when they discovered the hoax they were furious. Defoe was fined, pilloried, and imprisoned, and his book burnt by the common hangman, but not before it had done its work. The curious thing is that the Dissenters themselves failed to see through it, or refused to believe that it was not meant seriously, and the unfortunate author thus fell between two stools.

The Bill for the prevention of Occasional

Conformity was introduced at the instance of the University members in Parliament, and passed the Commons by a large majority. It was intended to exclude Dissenters altogether from the public life of the country, and from civil, military, and naval offices. The Lords, however, who still retained something of their old Whig feeling, amended the Bill in important particulars, and returned it to the Commons. It was then considered for some time in conference between the two Houses and was finally rejected in the Lords, fourteen Bishops voting in the majority. The excitement which this struggle caused was intense, and the whole country seemed to share in the resentment which the rejection of the Bill created. Swift, in one of his letters to Stella, writes: "I wish you had been here for ten days, during the highest and warmest reign of party and faction that I ever knew or read of upon the Bill against occasional conformity which two days ago was, upon the first reading, rejected by the Lords. It was so universal that I observed the dogs in the streets were much more contumelious and quarrelsome than usual, and the very night before the Bill went up, a committee of Whig and Tory cats had a very warm and loud debate upon the roof of our house. But why should we wonder at that, when the very ladies are split asunder into High Church and Low, and out of zeal for religion have hardly time to say their prayers. For the

rest, the whole body of the clergy with a great majority of the House of Commons were very violent for this Bill."

The failure of this attack only served to increase the hatred of Dissenters felt by the clergy and by a very large section of the populace. Sacheverell continued his campaign of calumny, and brought matters to a head in a famous sermon before the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London on "Perils from False Brethren." In it he asserted in the strongest terms the High Church doctrine of non-resistance, and charged with rebellion and high treason all who did not agree with him. The Dissenters came in for the usual measure of abuse. They were "monsters and vipers," "filthy dreamers and despisers of dominion," "miscreants begat in rebellion, born in sedition and nursed in faction," and much more of the same kind. Forty thousand copies of this "sweet discourse" were circulated. But it was too strong meat for the Government, especially as it contained some contemptuous references to Godolphin, the first minister of the Crown. Sacheverell was impeached and sentenced to deprivation for three years and to have his offending sermons burnt by the hangman. He at once became a popular hero. After his suspension he made a kind of triumphal progress through the country, and was everywhere received with the wildest enthusiasm. "High Church and Dr. Sacheverell" became

the popular cry. There were dangerous riots in many places in which the Dissenters suffered from the fury of the mob, and many meeting-houses were burnt down. The whole agitation was used to the utmost by the Church party and the Tories to bring the Whigs into unpopularity and to show them up as enemies of religion and of the Crown. It succeeded only too well. In 1711 another Bill against occasional conformity was brought in and passed both Houses without difficulty. It provided that all persons holding any public office, if they attended any meeting for divine worship where the Book of Common Prayer was not used, should forfeit their office and pay a fine of £40, the money to go to the informer. Such persons were to be held incapable of office until they could prove that they had attended no conventicle for a year. It was clearly seen by the Whigs that the exclusion of all Dissenters from public offices would probably imperil the Hanoverian succession. The leading Dissenters were therefore begged to retain their public positions, and were promised relief in a new reign. Most of them seem to have yielded to this political pressure. They ceased to attend conventicles and had services with private chaplains in their own houses.

The next blow was a much more serious one. It was the result of the agitation set on foot by Sacheverell and Wesley against

the Academies, and it took the shape of a Bill "to prevent the growth of Schism, and for the further security of the Church of England as by law established," which was introduced in 1714. This enacted that no person should teach or instruct youth either privately, or in a school or college, without conforming to the Church of England and obtaining a licence from a bishop. The penalty attached was three months' imprisonment. It further provided that no licensed teacher was to teach any catechism but that of the Church of England. Any person, however, who lost his licence for teaching an unauthorised catechism might recover it on swearing that he had not attended a conventicle for a year and, during the year, had three times received the sacrament in the Church of England. The Bill was passed with certain amendments exempting from its provisions teachers in elementary secular subjects and tutors in noble families. Before it came into operation, however, the Queen died, and it was repealed early in the new reign.

For the moment, however, the outlook for Nonconformists was very dark. On the Sunday morning that the Schism Act was to be enforced, Thomas Bradbury, Independent minister of the church in Fetter Lane, met Bishop Burnet, who rallied him on his desponding looks. "I am thinking," said Bradbury, "whether I shall have the

constancy and resolution of that noble company of martyrs whose ashes are deposited in this place, for I most assuredly expect to see similar times of persecution and violence and that I shall be called to suffer in a like cause." The Bishop then told him that the Queen was dying, and promised to send a messenger to Bradbury's church if the end came during the morning. While Bradbury was preaching the expected tidings were brought. He finished his sermon, and in his closing prayer spoke of George, King of Great Britain and Ireland. As Dr. Dale says, it was not unfitting that the first public announcement of the accession of the house of Hanover should be made in a Nonconformist meeting-house.

At the time of the death of Queen Anne, the spiritual condition of the Nonconformists was by no means satisfactory. They had suffered from Indulgence and the promise of Indulgence more than they did from persecution. No really trustworthy statistics are available, but such as there are seem to point to the fact that their numbers did not grow during Anne's reign, and there are complaints of secession on the part of younger members to the Established Church. Though the Nonconformists stood for liberty and progress, they were really very conservative in many respects. Theologically they had changed little, and they still indulged in sermons and prayers of inordinate length.

Their public services, which had lost much of the old fervour, were often dull and lifeless. They were suffering from the spirit of compromise, which had not only crept into their church life but had affected all their conduct. Burnet, who was no unfriendly critic, charges them with having forfeited much of their reputation for strictness. The decline continued during the reign of the first two Georges, and it is said that in this time more than fifty Nonconformist ministers joined the State Church.

On the accession of George I in 1714, the Dissenting ministers of London presented him with a loyal address. As they approached the King in their Geneva gowns, a nobleman of the Court said to Bradbury, "Is this a funeral?" "No, my lord," he replied, "it is a resurrection." The words exactly express the spirit with which the Nonconformists viewed the new reign. The first months of it were very much disturbed. The Jacobite outbreaks had to be dealt with, and the Church and Tory partisans showed their hostility to the house of Hanover by burning meeting-houses in many parts of the country. Through all these troubles the Dissenters gave repeated tokens of their loyalty, and among the first legislative measures of the reign was the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts. When George II came to the throne in 1727, the first Annual Bill of Indemnity

was passed for relieving Dissenters from the penalties incurred by violating the Test and Corporation Acts. This, however, was a very inadequate form of relief, and agitation was at once begun for obtaining the repeal of the obnoxious measure. This led to the definite organisation of the Dissenting Deputies representing the three great denominations. It was the first attempt to band Nonconformists together for the protection of their civil rights, and the society, which is still in existence, performed yeoman service in all the struggles for religious liberty which were yet in store. Their first efforts met with very little sympathy from Walpole. He had burnt his fingers in trying to obtain some relief for Quakers in the matter of Church rates, and he was very loath to face the cry, "The Church in danger." All attempts to secure the repeal of the Acts through independent Members of Parliament failed, and the matter was left to rest till 1787. But Walpole knew a better way. It was a favourite doctrine with him that every man had his price. When, therefore, it was suggested that the King should make a grant from the Royal purse for the relief of Dissenters he welcomed the idea eagerly. Thus the *Regium Donum* was established. At first five hundred a year, and later on a thousand a year, was given to certain ministers to be distributed at their discretion among the widows of ministers and poor ministers.

There can be no doubt that this did much harm. It acted, as Walpole intended that it should, as a sop, and is very likely responsible for the delay in the agitation for repeal of the Test Acts, and for the lethargic condition of Nonconformity at this period.

But there was yet another cause which contributed to the same result. In 1712 one Thomas Emlyn, a minister in Dublin, wrote a book confessing a very mild type of Unitarianism. He was prosecuted, fined a thousand pounds, and imprisoned till the fine should be paid. The case excited some attention and was the beginning of the renewal of the Unitarian controversy. The trouble began in Exeter, where one James Pierce, a man of great ability and influence, with two or three other Presbyterian ministers, was suspected of Arianism. After discussions in the Assembly of Devon and Cornwall, the matter was referred to seven ministers who, on the advice of some of their brethren in London, drew up a kind of ultimatum for the direction of the managers of the Exeter churches. These managers, after interviews with the erring ministers, dismissed two of them, Pierce and Hallet, from their churches. Meanwhile the question was being discussed in London. A meeting of the general body of Dissenters was held in Salter's Hall, at which it appeared that there were many London ministers who were in sympathy with the Exeter heretics. When

at a further meeting, an attempt was made to obtain the assent of those present to a declaration of belief in the Doctrines of the Trinity and of the Divinity of our Lord, the company at once divided into subscribers and non-subscribers. Each then constituted their own assembly, the large majority of the non-subscribers being Presbyterians, while the subscribing assembly consisted mainly of Congregationalists and Baptists under the leadership of Thomas Bradbury. This division marked a real doctrinal rupture between Congregationalists and Presbyterians The non-subscribers repudiated Arianism, but many of them later became Unitarians and were the founders of the Unitarian denomination, while eighteen or twenty of them, under some curious process of reaction, signed the thirty-nine Articles and joined the Church of England.

The Salter's Hall controversy had thus very important results. It meant almost the temporary extinction of Presbyterianism and a great strengthening of Congregationalism. Many of the subscribing Presbyterians joined Congregational Churches, and some subscribing Churches were obliged to obtain their ministers from Congregational Academies. A few Independent ministers went over, the most notable among them being James Foster, the minister of the Pinner's Hall Church. Many others of them, however, were profoundly influenced by the

rationalising spirit of the time, and it must be confessed that the spread of Deism was felt in Nonconformist pulpits and contributed powerfully to the barrenness of the churches in this period. The older Independent theologians had written and spoken more as prophets than as philosophers. They were entrusted with a word of the Lord and they gave utterance to it in no uncertain fashion. But in the period we have now reached preachers attempted to rationalise their message and to argue for its acceptance on philosophical grounds. Conspicuous among such men were Philip Doddridge and Isaac Watts. The former was a devout and earnest soul whose own religious experience saved him from any serious theological extravagances. He was eager, however, to soften down the asperities of the current Calvinism, and, so far as he could, to disarm criticism by making faith reasonable. Watts laid all the Churches under obligation by his hymns. Some of them, no doubt, are now entirely obsolete, but there are others which will live as long as sacred song does. And it may be said of all of them that they were so great an improvement on anything that had gone before as to amount to a revolution. Though he never inclined to Arianism, Watts showed some curious theological aberrations. He was a man of keen and speculative intellect and was very much under the influence of the rationalising

tendency. Along with these may be mentioned Matthew Henry, who died in 1714, with his great commentary on the Scriptures unfinished. This monumental work remained the standard of scripture exposition for many generations and is even used to-day. It was a work of immense industry, and fertile in illustration and suggestion. Its influence on preachers was very great, and it helped to keep the pulpit true to the Bible in an age when the danger of mere speculation was very real.

One good effect of the Salter's Hall controversy was the impetus it gave to the feeling against subscription to creeds. This was shared equally by subscribers and non-subscribers, and was fostered also by the rationalistic movement. It led, however, to a spirit of indifferentism in the churches and to a low conception of Christian obligation in life as well as in creed. Nonconformity is always the fruit of deep conviction and the expression of a vigorous religious life. Where these are not it has little or no reason to exist, and remains but an empty shell. It was no wonder, therefore, that at this time "the decay of the Dissenting interest" seemed to many close observers to be imminent. None were more conscious of this decline than the Nonconformist leaders themselves, and it may at least be said for them that they did their best to diagnose the mischief and to suggest

remedies. From this period date a number of most interesting pamphlets dealing with the decay of dissent and with the need for religious revival, which throw much light on the spiritual condition both of the churches and of the people generally. Among the causes alleged for the decline among Dissenters the most important is stated as "Ignorance of their own principles." The fundamental principle of Nonconformity is said to be liberty, and the times were such that men tended to lose the good old Puritan conception of the value of liberty in religion They were too ready to make terms with the Established Church, and to entrust the education of their children to institutions managed by that Church. So among themselves also there was some danger of forgetting the freedom of the spirit in the desire to secure uniformity of doctrine if not of worship. The ministers are not allowed sufficient freedom in preaching, and the people are not willing "to be instructed by those who have the courage to teach them even disagreeable truths, rather than flattered into what may possibly be false, and if it be true, is of the least importance in religion." It is complained that congregations are too jealous of heresy in their younger ministers, and that the form in which truth is stated is held to be almost more important than the substance. Then again, the ministry is not held in sufficient

estimation. It is badly paid and no inducement is provided for men of good family and education to enter its ranks. The academies are not doing all that they should. The education given in them needs to be of a higher standard, with a clear distinction between the courses in Arts and Theology. There should be more attention paid to homiletics and deportment, and one writer quoted by Dr. Dale says, "It may seem odd and whimsical to propose a dancing-master for one tutor at an academy: but if something equivalent to it was contrived to give the students a gracefulness and gentility of address, and prune off all clumsiness and awkwardness that is disagreeable to people of fashion, and which gives learning the air of pedantry, it would do them a most eminent service."

In another anonymous pamphlet published in 1731 the subject is dealt with still more broadly and thoroughly. The writer sees that Nonconformity is suffering, as all religion is suffering, not only from a general decay of earnestness and moral power, but also from causes peculiar to itself. Its strength lies among the trading sections of the community, and trade has been very bad, hence a decline both in numbers and in wealth. At the same time there is no doubt that Nonconformists are not as keen about their principles as they were. This is seen in their lack of care as to the education of their

children under Nonconformist auspices. "We thought it a very unnatural hardship laid upon us by the Schism Act which took away from us our privilege of educating our children: and methinks we should not tamely and foolishly do almost the same thing that Act aimed at, by voluntarily putting our children under such sort of tuition. Though the contrivers of that Act did it to their eternal infamy, yet in this they acted a wise and consistent part, taking thereby the likeliest step to suppress our interest. And shall we, who are sensible of their view in it, by taking much the same steps be contributing towards the accomplishment of it? I would not, therefore, where there is any opportunity of avoiding it, send a child to a Tory school so much as to learn his A.B.C."

In a similar pamphlet Isaac Watts deals with the more general aspects of the situation. The decay of vital religion is universal, and has had its influence on the Nonconformists especially because it is essential to the maintenance of their position that they should be in earnest. They share in the general tendency to neglect the Lord's Day, and are too often content with worshipping once only thereon. They have declined from the high moral standard of their fathers. They do not talk about religion as readily as they used to do, and they are much given to scandal. Their life has become less regular

and disciplined, they are more prone to the pursuit of pleasure and to extravagant living, nor are they so particular as they should be as to the character of the amusements in which they take part. Add to these things a similar carelessness in theology, and a lack of reverence for some of the fundamentals of the faith, and we have a very dark picture indeed and one curiously modern in many of its features.

But the story is not altogether so black as it seems. Many of these pamphlets brought forth replies, and one of the most interesting of them is written by Doddridge. He is especially insistent on the point that there is no real falling off in numbers, decline in one part of the country being more than met by advance in another. Speaking of the Midland counties, he says: "I know that in many of them, the number of Dissenters is greatly increased within these twenty years: and the interest continues so to flourish, that I am confident some of our honest people who converse only with their own neighbourhood, will be surprised to hear of an Enquiry into the causes of its decay." At the same time he admits much that is said as to the other signs of decay. There were not wanting, however, attempts to arrest the decline. We have records of meetings both of ministers and laymen held in London and elsewhere in order to concert measures for reviving the threatened "interest." Books and lectures

defending the older theological positions were published, and new academies for training ministers were founded. The "Northern Education Society" was established, principally in order to attack the Socinianism which was spreading among the Northern Churches. In connection with it appeared the Heckmondwike Academy in Yorkshire, of which there is a modern survival in the Heckmondwike Lecture. Attempts were made to hold lectures of an apologetic kind in many of the larger churches, and to improve the evening services with the view of attracting audiences from the outside.

As we shall see later, the normal Nonconformist Churches and ministers looked with great disfavour at first on the revival under Wesley and Whitefield which broke out at this time. Considering their traditions, this is not altogether to be wondered at. But it does not argue by any means a complete indifference to vital religion on their part. Enough has been said to show that the very opposite was the case. The men of these Churches were deeply concerned about the low moral condition of the age, and about the failure of the organised Churches to cope with it. They recognised the need for some new breath from God to breathe life into the dry bones. They were doing what they could to prepare the way and to supply the needed conditions for the change. If

when the new life came, it came in ways which were altogether unexpected and unwelcome, this was but in fulfilment of the principle, "The wind bloweth where it listeth." That the Nonconformists of the day should have been slow to hear the sound of it was their misfortune as much as their fault. The time came when they shared to the full in the new life which the revival brought.

CHAPTER X

THE REVIVAL

THE earlier half of the eighteenth century in England was a period of moral decay and religious indifference. Bishop Butler, in the preface to his *Analogy*, declared that "it had come to be taken for granted that Christianity is not so much as a subject for inquiry: but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious," and Addison testified that "there was less appearance of religion in England than in any neighbouring state or kingdom." We have seen how the Nonconformists had lost their first enthusiasm, and were at a low ebb. In the Church of England matters were no better. There were to be found there the practical materialism and hard rationalism characteristic of

the age. Such religion as there was had become above all things formal, decent and dull. Enthusiasm was strongly deprecated, and religion as well as the State Establishment were regarded both by politicians and clergy as but an excellent means of preserving the obedience of the vulgar to the powers that were. The common clergy were worldly and ignorant and too often dominated by political considerations in their whole presentation of their message. It is true that the age possessed the virtue of toleration in a larger measure than ever before, but it was the toleration of indifference rather than of an intelligent charity or breadth of mind. The neglect of religion had reacted on the condition of the people. The lower classes were sunk in ignorance and vice, and, in many parts of the country, lived an almost pagan existence. Drunkenness was extremely prevalent and almost unrebuked. The life of the industrial populations was miserable in the extreme. Their pleasures were coarse and animal, and breaches of the law were punished with brutalising inhumanity.

It was when the darkness was at its deepest that signs of the dawn began to appear. The general uneasiness of the religious world was shown by the rise of Societies for the Reformation of Manners, in which Churchmen and Dissenters united to mitigate in some way the more palpable evils of the town life. But something more radical than this

was needed. Among the heralds of the better time was William Law, a Non-juring clergyman, who lived in the first sixty years of the century. He published, among many controversial works, two books which served to awaken the minds of men to the need for a new life, and had considerable influence in preparing John Wesley for his work. These were *A Treatise on Christian Perfection* and *The Serious Call to a Devout Life.* To the latter both Dr. Johnson and Gibbon have paid their tribute.

The first real stirrings of the revival were felt in Wales. In the Principality the condition of religion and morals was even worse than in England. The Church was practically dead and had little or no hold of the people. Dissent too was very weak, though there were some active Churches in the South. The first of the Welsh revivalists was Griffith Jones, an Established Church clergyman who in many striking ways anticipated the work of Whitefield and Wesley. He was an earnest and enthusiastic preacher, whole-hearted in his devotion to his work, and altogether disinterested. He had, too, the same kind of practical sagacity and organising power as Wesley. He may be called the first of the field preachers, and his work up and down the country produced an abiding religious impression. He founded a system of "circulating schools" which lasted for more than a generation, and did much for

popular education and the spread of knowledge of the Bible. He was aided and followed by Howell Harris, a half-educated Anglican layman, who devoted his life to the religious instruction of his fellow-countrymen. Harris was a bold and effective preacher who persevered in his work amid the most relentless opposition and persecution, and by his alliance with Whitefield became the founder of Methodism in Wales. Along with him must be mentioned Daniel Rowlands, an Anglican curate, who also obtained great popularity as a preacher. It was the withdrawal of his licence by the Bishop of St. David's that first led to the separation from the Church of England. The new Evangelical preaching gradually detached the vast majority of the population of Wales from the Established Church, and it has remained so detached until the present time.

The Evangelical Revival in England was the result, in the first instance, of the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. John Wesley was the son of that Samuel Wesley who, having once been a Nonconformist, had become one of their bitterest opponents. His mother was the daughter of Samuel Annesley, one of the ejected of 1662, and a woman of remarkable powers and strength of character. Their famous son was brought up under strongly Anglican influences, and was easily subject to religious emotionalism. He made himself notorious when at Oxford by the severity of his self-imposed penances, and by founding,

along with his brother Charles, a Society of like-minded men called the Holy Club. He was ordained while still at Oxford, where he remained until the death of his father in 1735. Up to this time he was merely an unusually earnest clergyman with strong High Church proclivities, an Arminian theology, and a passion for personal holiness. The first crisis in his life came from association with the Moravians with whom he was brought into contact on his voyage to Georgia, whither he went with Charles on a mission to convert the heathen. On his return to England, after a by no means successful mission, he made it his business to see more of the Moravians, and learnt from them that form of justification by faith and that view of experimental religion which became the foundation of all his later teaching. It was in the year 1738, as he tells in his *Journal*, that the light came to himself. "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed, I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more

especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all what I now first felt in my heart." It is generally admitted that the meeting thus described marks an epoch in English history. For it is from this time and place that the Methodist movement must be dated. Charles Wesley had already had a somewhat similar experience, and for some time Whitefield had been preaching the new birth and justification by faith.

At first the work was carried on strictly within the Established Church. Wesley himself, it must be remembered, was always an Anglican in spirit, and would never have set up a separate Church had he not been compelled to do so. He formed societies on the model of the Moravian societies, and of the Holy Club at Oxford, consisting of men and women whose hearts had been touched and who sought a closer spiritual communion and experience than the ordinary services of the Church could give them. He revived the old Christian love feasts, and invented that most potent engine of the Methodist system, the class meeting. These formed a Church within the Church, and, whatever may have been Wesley's original intention, contained within them, from the first, the elements of dissent. The Methodists were the new Puritans, and by the same combination of forces that we saw at work in an earlier age were driven to become separatists.

But the Methodist leaders were nothing if not missionary. They carried on an active and tireless propaganda wherever they could obtain a hearing. The whole world was their parish. At first the Wesleys confined themselves to speaking in Anglican pulpits or in those parishes where they could obtain the goodwill of the incumbent. But they were soon compelled to go farther. They had a new gospel to proclaim, and they could not proclaim it without suggesting that the ordinary preaching of the Church was something less than Christian. It was no pleasant thing, therefore, for a clergyman to open his pulpit to men who addressed his congregation as pagans and assumed that they were receiving Christian teaching for the first time. Then, again, the manner of the preachers was very different from that to which the English Church was accustomed. Instead of the polished periods of a read sermon, there were to be heard fervid extempore declamations and intense personal appeals. The congregations, too, tended to be larger than the buildings could hold, and decorous church-goers were scandalised at being crowded out of their accustomed seats by a rabble. All this speedily produced a great deal of bitter feeling. The churches in many places were closed against the Methodist preachers, and the preachers tended, in spite of themselves, to create feeling against the Church. Meanwhile, Whitefield,

who had never been so scrupulous as the Wesleys, had won great success by preaching in the open air, especially among the Kingswood miners near Bristol. It was Whitefield, aided by the circumstances we have mentioned, who reconciled Wesley to "this strange way of preaching in the fields." Then began that wonderful itinerary which lasted as long as Wesley lived, and changed the face of religion in England.

Wesley himself was a most remarkable man, and admirably fitted for the work he was called to do. In personal appearance he was "rather below the middle size, but beautifully proportioned, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, yet muscular and strong, with a forehead clear and smooth, a bright, penetrating eye, and a lovely face, which retained the freshness of its complexion to the last period of his life." As Sir Leslie Stephen says, he was a human gamecock; a born fighter, who never knew when he was beaten. At the same time, he was absolutely master of himself, and, though highly emotional, he never let his emotions get beyond his control. He spoke clearly, quietly and logically, yet with a passion and an intensity that carried all before it. He was a keen observer, and had a wide knowledge of human nature. His courage was magnificent, and he subdued raging mobs by the sheer force of his eye and mind. With all this he was a born leader and organiser; he

could not only kindle passion, but could do that far more difficult thing—harness it for effective service. Mentally he was simply a man of his day. He shared all the popular superstitions of the time, and was credulous to a degree. He was quite unable to appreciate the value of science and scientific discovery, and was a little afraid of the intellectual side of religion. as he was also of the mystical. His bent was above all things practical, and to him Christianity was not founded on argument, but on the actual life of God in the soul of man through Jesus Christ. In reading the *Journal*, in which he has left a detailed account of his wanderings and work, one is struck with the saving common sense of the man, with his splendid vitality and tireless endurance, and with the atmosphere of faith in which he lived, moved and had his being.

Whitefield was a man of very different stamp, though equally powerful in his own way. He was a supreme orator ; judged by the effects which he produced, perhaps among the greatest that the world has seen. He had all the qualities of the emotional temperament, and was without either the logic or the self-control that distinguished Wesley. At the same time, he was a man of broader mind and wider sympathies. As a preacher he was highly rhetorical and impassioned, and appealed to the feelings rather than to the minds or consciences of his audience.

Yet he never appealed in vain. He could move his hearers in the most extraordinary way, making them weep with penitence, tremble with terror, and laugh aloud with excess of joy. He seldom preached without bursting into tears himself, and yet he kept his hold over men like Bolingbroke and Lord Chesterfield. Much of his power was due to the fact that he was absolutely sincere. His passion for souls was genuine, and he often spent the greater part of the night in prayer for the success of his work. Yet his published sermons give little or no indication of any special merit. Here and there are to be found fine passages and apt illustrations, but in general they are verbose and extravagant, and often seem more calculated to excite ridicule than reverence. They show very clearly that they must have depended for their effect on the man's personality and oratorical skill. It is the universal testimony of his hearers that when preaching Whitefield seemed like a man inspired, and that he carried all before him with the rush and fervour of his eloquence.

It is impossible here to tell in any detail the story of the labours of these two men. They travelled from end to end of this country as well as in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. They preached to tens of thousands of people, in the pulpits of churches where it was allowed, but more often on the hillside, in jails, or the back streets

of towns. As time went on they were bitterly opposed by the clergy, who often incited the mob against them. Their followers were treated with the utmost cruelty, and they themselves were continually in peril of their lives. But such was their zeal for the cause, and such their pity for lost and fallen men, that no threats could deter them, and no violence make them afraid. They bore down opposition by the sheer weight of their enthusiasm, and often those who came to stone and to scoff remained to pray. The most extraordinary physical and mental effects followed from their preaching. It was no uncommon thing for men and women to be seized with violent convulsions and to fall down roaring and foaming at the mouth. Others believed themselves to be possessed with devils, and Wesley, who quite shared the belief, regarded himself as able to cast the demons out. Neither he nor Whitefield sought in any way to check these unhealthy manifestations. They looked upon them as acceptable signs of the working of the Spirit of God, and their preaching was often carefully calculated so as to produce them. It is not surprising that such extravagances not infrequently led to religious mania of a very distressing kind. This, however, was no more than a by-product of the work. It is a phenomenon common to all religious revivals, and it would be an entire mistake to imagine that

it was specially characteristic of the Methodist movement. The remarkable thing about Methodism is that, despite the atmosphere of emotionalism in which it was cradled, it yet remained so entirely sober and produced such lasting practical results. This was altogether due to the statesmanlike qualities which Wesley possessed in such abundance. He was the last man in the world to lose his head, and he seized every opportunity as it arose, and turned it to account with masterly skill. Wherever he went he left behind him memorials in the shape of societies, meeting-houses, schools and charities. He founded a vast organisation of lay preachers, which is generally recognised to be a model of its kind.

It was on the practical side of his work that Wesley came into definite collision with the Established Church. He did so altogether against his will, and under the stress of circumstances which he could not control. It became necessary for him to establish separate meeting-places for his societies wherever they were excluded from the parish church, and in time he was obliged to ordain his preachers so that they might be able to administer the sacraments. At the same time it should be understood that there was never any organised opposition to him in the Anglican Church. The Church lost a great opportunity, as much through indifference as through any other fault. Wesley

himself never willingly worked with the Dissenters, and never wished to be reckoned among them, while they, on their part, generally left him severely alone. After his death, his followers, very few of whom had ever felt with him in this matter, found that they were Dissenters whether they wished it or not.

The position of Whitefield was altogether different. He was a Calvinist, while Wesley was an Arminian, and he had therefore some theological sympathy with Dissenters from the first. Then, too, his long absences in America tended to broaden his ecclesiastical outlook. Thus he was often welcomed by Dissenters who kept aloof from Wesley, and in some places their chapels were opened to him when he was refused the use of the Anglican church. He had none of Wesley's ecclesiastical temper, and was altogether scornful of conventions. This made it comparatively easy for him to follow his own line and to separate from the Church of his fathers.

The contribution of Charles Wesley to the movement was a very important one. He was a man of much smaller calibre than either his brother or Whitefield. Though he could preach sometimes with great unction and effect, he was very unequal in the pulpit, and was himself precise and narrow to a degree. But he was not without imagination, and he had a real gift

for writing hymns. These contributed immensely to the success and popularity of the early Methodist meetings. Though there is some sad doggerel among them, many of them, like "Jesu, Lover of my soul," are among the classics of hymnody.

The theological differences between Wesley and Whitefield were fundamental, and soon led to divisions within the Methodist camp. There was much controversy, carried on with indecent abusiveness by Toplady, and with philosophical restraint by Fletcher of Madeley. But the two leaders never allowed their differences to estrange them personally. They still spoke of each other with love and respect, though each went his own way. Whitefield eventually attached himself to that masterful woman Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, and through the services held in her house made Methodism for a time popular among the élite of London society. Herself a strong Calvinist, Lady Huntingdon recognised, as Wesley did, that organisation was necessary to the permanence of the new Faith, and was instrumental in founding two denominations—the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales, with the help of Howell Harris, and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in England. At first both these societies were set up as within the Church of England, and the Countess had no intention of severing herself from it. But she built places of worship, and a legal decision compelled her to

register them under the Toleration Act, *i.e.* as Dissenting chapels. "So," she complained, "I am to be cast out of the Church now, only for what I have been doing these forty years—speaking and living for Jesus Christ." The Countess also established Colleges for the ministry at Trevecca and Cheshunt. The Calvinistic Methodists of Wales are now a large and flourishing denomination. The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion is small and dwindling, and has practically been absorbed into Congregationalism.

With regard to the organisation of Methodism during his lifetime, Wesley was an opportunist. He took the occasion as it arose and did not care to make any clearly defined plans. This was partly due to his desire not to make too complete a breach with Anglicanism, and partly to his autocratic temper, which made him retain control of things in his own hands as long as possible. Even as late as 1790 he wrote: "The Churchman might go to Church still, the Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, might retain their own opinions, and attend their own congregations. The having a real desire to flee from the wrath to come was the only condition required of them. Whoever, therefore, feared God and worked righteousness was qualified for this society." This, however, was a counsel of perfection. Many years earlier, in 1744, Wesley had recognised the fact that Methodist Churches were in existence,

and had invited his preachers to meet him in conference. These conferences became annual, but were at first confined to spiritual matters and attempted no legislation. That, however, came later. The one principle which Wesley laid down was that of his own power to rule. He retained entirely in his own hands the "power of admitting into and excluding from the societies under my care: of choosing and removing stewards: of receiving or not receiving helpers: of appointing them when, where and how to help me, and of desiring any of them to confer with me when I see good." "None needs submit to it unless he will. Every preacher and every member may leave when he pleases." There is no doubt that Wesley never contemplated anything like self-government in his Churches or in the denomination. He seemed to expect that some individual would succeed him, and is said to have mentioned Fletcher of Madeley for the post. In 1784 he took legal steps to perpetuate the constitution of the new body in the shape in which it had grown up. The Legal Hundred was constituted, and in it was vested all authority in matters of discipline and administration. This became the basis of Conference, and it is noteworthy that it made Conference a purely clerical body. Wesley retained his ecclesiastical and sacerdotal spirit to the last, as witness a letter which he wrote in 1790.

"As long as I live, the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We have not and never had any such custom. We are no republicans and never intend to be. It would be better for those who are so minded to go quietly away."

It was impossible that this position should be maintained without opposition. Wesley's followers had none of his reluctance to set up Methodist Churches or an organisation outside the establishment. And while they reverenced Wesley himself and were willing to accept his personal rule, they were not anxious to transfer their allegiance to any other. After his death and before the period of mourning was over a circular was issued from a Conference held in Yorkshire, declaring that no successor to him ought to be appointed, and suggesting an annual President. This was a declaration not only against the personal rule of one man, but also against the idea of having bishops in Methodism. Wesley had sanctioned this in America, and was thought to have favoured the idea for England also. In this there were many of his followers who agreed with him, but the general sense of the preachers was against it, and, after some time and discussion, the suggestions of the Yorkshire Conference were adopted.

The question of the relation to the Establishment then came up in an acute form over the administration of the sacraments.

Up to the time of his death Wesley insisted that the sacrament should never be received by his followers except from Episcopally ordained hands. In certain cases he had himself ordained preachers, but, generally speaking, his followers received the sacrament in their parish churches or did not receive it at all. In London they went so far as to bail out a clergyman from the Fleet Prison for the purpose. Most of the lay trustees and many of the older preachers were willing that this state of things should continue. They were really Anglicans and held the Anglican view of the priesthood. On the other hand, the great body of Methodists had been brought into the societies from a condition of indifference to all religion, and had received nothing from the Anglican Church but hatred and persecution. Many of them also had come to have strong convictions on the subject of the priesthood of all believers. As might be expected, such a situation led to long and bitter controversy. But in the end the will of the majority prevailed, and Conference permitted the sacrament to be administered in churches where a majority required it, subject always to the consent of Conference. It was thirty years before the sacrament could be administered in every Methodist chapel as a matter of course. In this way complete separation from the Established Church came about, but only reluctantly and by degrees.

The next question in dispute was that of the representation of the laity in Conference. Here the Conservatives won the day, and it was decided that Conference should consist of preachers only, though certain powers were delegated to local bodies of laymen. This, however, was not enough for many of the more ardent spirits in Methodism. The time was one in which democratic principles were coming very much to the front, and the autocratic and exclusive system which Wesley had favoured was very galling to some of the best men among his successors. In 1797 the first secession from the general body of Methodists took place on the question of lay representation, and the Methodist New Connexion was formed. Some five thousand members withdrew, under the leadership of William Thom and Alexander Kilham. The new body was organised on Presbyterian lines so as to secure the independence of the circuit and the representative character of the Conference. Its unit was the individual Church meeting which had power to sanction the admission of members, to elect stewards, to recommend candidates for the ministry, and to appoint representatives to the Leaders' Meetings. The Leaders' Meeting consisted of circuit ministers, class leaders, officers, and representatives. The circuit Quarterly Meeting was elected by it to transact the business of the circuit and to appoint representatives to Conference, which was the sovereign

power in the denomination. The Connexion grew steadily and doubled its membership in the first twenty-five years of its existence. At the time of its amalgamation into the United Methodist Church it had nearly forty thousand members and some flourishing missions.

A further secession, that of the Primitive Methodists, took place in the year 1807. For some time previously to this date Camp Meetings after the American revivalist model had been held at Mow Cop, a hill on the border line of Staffordshire and Cheshire. Under the leadership of Hugh Bourne the Camp Meeting system greatly extended and produced remarkable revivals, which were often accompanied by scenes of excitement similar to those caused by the early preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. Conference, however, seemed to think that the time for such things had passed away, and resolved that Camp Meetings should not be held. Bourne ignored the resolution, and went on with his work, until he was expelled from the Society along with certain others who acted with him. These men, with about two hundred of their followers, formed the Primitive Methodist denomination. They did so gradually and without any very definite plan. Beginning in a single circuit they followed the method of village preaching and gradually established societies of their own converts. They were full of earnestness and apostolic

passion for souls, and they worked largely among the poorest and most illiterate of the population. Their first Conference was not held until 1820, and their polity came to be based on the District Meeting and District Representation. Stewards were appointed by the District Leaders, and Conference was made a representative body, containing two laymen to every one minister. Primitive Methodism has done a magnificent work, especially in the villages and small towns, and to-day its membership stands at over 210,000.

Very similar was the origin of the Bible Christians in Devonshire and Cornwall. Its leaders, F. W. Bourne and William O'Bryan, were expelled from Methodism for irregular preaching, and started a new denomination in 1815. They came to be called Bible Christians from their habit of carrying the Bible with them openly in all their preaching work. Though a small denomination, they have had a remarkable history, having produced some striking religious personalities and done a great deal of missionary work. They, too, are now absorbed in the United Methodist Church.

These various secessions produced no change whatever in the temper of the Wesleyan Conference. Indeed it seemed to grow more conservative and autocratic as time went on. For many years its policy was largely shaped by the Rev. Jabez Bunting, an able and sincere man, but a

thorough ecclesiastical despot. About the middle of the nineteenth century disputes which had long been carried on came to a head, and resulted in further secessions of about one hundred thousand members to form the United Methodist Free Churches. It is pleasant, however, to record that these disputes and divisions have left little bitterness behind them, and that the tendency today within Methodism is all in the direction of reunion. Methodism as a whole has grown by leaps and bounds all over the world. As we shall see later on its traditional conservatism is breaking down in many directions, and it is adapting itself with more versatility than any other Church to the needs of the populations in large towns at the present time. It is still thoroughly Evangelical in spirit, while using to the full the advantages which its splendid organisation affords. On the whole the divisions have been a gain rather than a loss. They have given to Methodism an elasticity and a power of adaptation which it would not otherwise have possessed, and they set an example of unity amid diversity which other Churches are sure in time to follow.

The Revival of the eighteenth century was not confined to Methodism. It was strongly felt in the Church of England where it is marked by the rise of the Evangelical party. Towards the end of his career Wesley quite regained favour with Anglicans, and was

constantly invited to preach in their pulpits. He had many sympathisers at Cambridge, where the University was more tolerant towards his followers than was Oxford. It was there that Rowland Hill began his work, and although he was obliged to remain outside the Church, for no bishop would ordain him, he made Cambridge a great centre of Evangelical teaching, and gave the first impulse to the work of Simeon. Wesley was also responsible for starting an itinerant movement within the Church through two clergymen, Berridge in Bedfordshire, and Grimshaw in Yorkshire. These were both eccentrics, but they had the real Evangelistic passion, and in the extent of their wanderings and power over the common people, proved themselves true disciples of their master. Grimshaw was vicar of the parish of Haworth afterwards made famous by the Brontës. When he went to it he had not a dozen communicants, but before his work was done they numbered more than twelve hundred. Other leading Evangelicals in the Church were John Newton the friend of Cowper, Wm. Romaine, and Venn of Huddersfield. These men had all the defects which became so conspicuous in the Evangelical party in later years. They were narrow and fanatical, they had an unreasoning hatred of Romanism, and, while they neglected the intellectual side of religion altogether, they yet subjected every one to

rigorous theological tests. But they did their appointed work. They made religion real in the Church of England, they raised the standard of clerical morals, and infused a new fire both into worship and preaching. At the same time they kindled a spirit of genuine philanthropy and missionary zeal.

The influence of the revival on the Nonconformist Churches was more gradual and less revolutionary. With them it was not a case of the sudden outbreak of new life but of a warming and quickening of the life that was already there. Preaching became less formal and more evangelistic, and a new missionary and philanthropic impulse began to be felt. One can trace this in men like Watts and Doddridge, but the full force of it was not manifested until the early years of the nineteenth century. It was seen, however, in the beginnings of the movement for the abolition of the slave trade, in the prison reforms of John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, in the commencement of the Sunday School under Robert Raikes, and in the foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society under Carey, Marshman and Ward. If Evangelicalism involved a certain set-back towards asceticism, Sabbatarianism and intolerance, it has at least this to its credit, that it gave rise to a new and broader humanitarianism. In this respect it need have no fear of the test "by their fruits ye shall know them."

In the latter half of the eighteenth century we can trace a slow but steady growth of public opinion in favour of religious liberty and equality. In the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 the Dissenters had made great exertions on behalf of the Government, and it was recognised as an anomaly that an Act of Indemnity should need to be passed in order to save them from the penalties incurred by taking up arms in defence of the Government. Public opinion was further instructed by a case brought against the Corporation of London by three Dissenters, Messrs. Sharpe, Streatfield and Evans, who had been elected to the office of Sheriff and then fined because they could not serve. It was the pleasing habit of the Corporation to nominate known Dissenters for this office, and when they refused to qualify themselves by taking the sacrament in the Church of England, to fine them roundly. It is reckoned that the Corporation obtained in this way no less a sum than fifteen thousand pounds, which it devoted to the building of the new Mansion House. The three men above mentioned, at the instigation of the Dissenting deputies, determined to resist the fine. The matter was carried to the House of Lords, where it was decided in their favour. In giving judgment Lord Mansfield announced that it was now no crime for a man to be a Dissenter, or to refuse to take the sacrament in the Church of England.

From this victory dates the beginning of a new movement in the direction of civil and religious liberty. At first the leaders in it were mainly Unitarians, and to them, and especially to Dr. Joseph Priestley, the Nonconformity of the period owed a very great debt. The struggle began with an attempt to widen the Toleration Act by relieving Nonconformists from subscription to the greater number of the Thirty-nine Articles. This was not carried till 1779, when a declaration of adherence to Christianity and of belief in the Scriptures was substituted for the Articles. But the discussion of the subject did great good. It brought out the fundamental evil of subscription and crystallised the Nonconformist position in regard to the relation of the Church to the civil power. It was in the course of one of the debates in the House of Lords on this measure that the Earl of Chatham made his memorable defence of Nonconformists. "The Dissenting ministers are represented as men of close ambition: they are so, my Lords: and their ambition is to keep close to the college of fishermen not of cardinals; and to the doctrines of inspired apostles not to the decrees of interested and aspiring bishops. They contend for a scriptural and spiritual worship: we have a Calvinistic creed, a Popish liturgy, an Arminian clergy. The Reformation has laid open the Scriptures to all: let not the

Bishops shut them again. Laws in support of ecclesiastical power are pleaded which it would shock humanity to execute."

The next attack was directed against the Test and Corporation Acts, and repeated efforts, in which all sections of Nonconformity united, were made for their repeal. In this campaign the Dissenters found a magnificent ally in Charles James Fox, whose speeches contain the best possible refutation of Established Church theory. But the cry of the "Church in danger" was raised, and Pitt sedulously fostered it. Public opinion was not yet ripe for the change, and for a time the hope of it was abandoned. But the agitation had at least called attention to Dissent and its grievances, and that in a way not altogether to be desired. The French Revolution had greatly excited the popular mind, and the sympathy with it which had been expressed by many leading Nonconformists caused them to be regarded as enemies of law and order. A violent and most unreasoning agitation against Nonconformists broke out, and the Unitarians felt the full fury of it. Dr. Priestley's house in Birmingham was burnt to the ground, to the cry of "Church and King!" and the Tories everywhere denounced Dissenters as Republicans and dangerous to society. But, once more, Nonconformity gained by persecution. There was a strong revival of the Free Church spirit, and it is pleasant to

record that while George III expressed his approval of the treatment meted out to Priestley, Nonconformists from all over the country sent to him addresses of sympathy. From the time of this agitation dates a form of persecution which has since become very common. While in some places in the country Nonconformists were obliged to arm themselves in order to defend their homes against the mob, we read of others in which farmers and others refused to employ those who would not attend the Established Church, and of the boycotting of Nonconformist tradesmen. For the moment it was impossible to go any farther in the direction of seeking the removal of disabilities, and Nonconformists could do nothing but bide their time.

CHAPTER XI

PROGRESS AND CONSOLIDATION

THE condition of Nonconformists at the beginning of the nineteenth century was such as is very difficult to realise to-day. They were still under the ban of the law; they were unable to hold any public offices; the national Universities were closed to them; they could not be married in their own churches nor be buried save with the rites of

the Church of England. They were compelled to pay church rates for the support of the Establishment, and, if their worship was tolerated, it was only in specially licensed conventicles. Add to these things the fact that reaction was in full force and Dissenters everywhere denounced as Jacobites and revolutionaries, and that their growth and prosperity were viewed by the authorities with alarm and hatred, and we have a condition of things that might well have led them to give up their cause in despair. So far from this being the case, however, they were everywhere active and full of zeal. Indeed, it was freely said that one reason why efforts to improve their position were somewhat slackened during this period was that they were so fully occupied with the work of evangelism and philanthropy. Certainly there was need for it. The country was suffering grievously from the prolonged war with France; there was much poverty and great unrest. Public life was tainted with corruption, and disinterested service either of the country or of mankind was very far to seek. Yet it was just now that prison reform was seriously taken in hand; that movements for popular education were set on foot; that parliamentary reform was begun; that the slave trade was declared illegal and finally abolished; that missionary societies were started, and that the British and Foreign Bible Society began its work.

In all of these events Nonconformists had their full share, and very frequently they took the lead. The founding of the Bible Society on an unsectarian basis gave rise to a dispute in which the attitude of the average Churchman towards Dissent was made abundantly clear. It was thought a monstrous and scandalous thing that Dissenters should be admitted to any society on an equality with Churchmen. Men feared that "the pre-eminence of the Established religion would be gradually forgotten and lost," and that Dissenters only joined the new movement in order to "carry on their evil designs against Church and State." For all that, the Society flourished exceedingly, with the support of the Nonconformists and of the more evangelical in the Church of England.

The first and most important task which the Free Churches had to face in this period was the removal of disabilities. For seventy years they were engaged in a life-and-death struggle for freedom. That they won a great succession of triumphs was due, not so much to their own powers, and to the ability with which they were led, as to the inherent justice of their cause and the growing democratic feeling in the country. The nation itself was waking to a new life, and the Nonconformists found themselves inevitably sharing the aspirations of the people. The cause of freedom in religion was bound up with the liberties of the democracy. What-

ever may be thought to be the case to-day, historically, at any rate, Nonconformity was committed without question to all those causes which are now grouped under the name Liberal. There is no need to apologise for the fact that Dissenters acted politically. If they were to remain true to their principles, and if they were to advance the cause they had at heart, they could do no other. Their success may be measured by the well-known words of Lord John Russell: "I know the Dissenters. They gave us the emancipation of the slave. They gave us the Reform Bill. They gave us Free Trade. And they will give us the abolition of Church Rates."

But this is to anticipate. The first-fruits of victory was the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in the year 1828. The work of the Dissenting Deputies, and of the more recently founded Protestant Society, had discovered to Nonconformists something of their strength. They were in close alliance with the Whigs, and, being secure of their support, they began again the agitation for repeal of the Acts. By this time the passing of an Indemnity Act was become an annual affair, and, while it somewhat relieved the Dissenters, it showed, at the same time, how little danger there would be either to the Church or to the Crown in putting them on an equality with all other citizens. In spite of this, there was much opposition, and the Acts were only repealed on condition that

all magistrates and holders of municipal offices should make a declaration that they would not use their position "to injure or weaken the Protestant Church as it is by law established in England, or to disturb the Bishops and Clergy in the Possession of any Rights or Privileges to which such Church or the said Bishops and Clergy are or may be by Law entitled."

The Nonconformists, under the leadership of John Bright, were conspicuous among the supporters of the great Reform Bill of 1832. Its passing largely increased their political power, and led many of them to believe that the time was not far distant when complete religious equality would be won. They scarcely realised how ingrained was the conservatism of the British people. They made a good beginning, however, with an attack on Church Rates, arguing that they ought not to be compelled to pay rates for the maintenance of buildings used for religious services at which they were never present and to the forms of which they conscientiously objected. It was argued on the other side, in the words of Sir Erskine May, that "the fabric of the Church was national property—an edifice set apart by law for public worship according to the religion of the State—open to all—inviting all to its services—and as much the common property of all as a public museum or picture gallery." The first suggestion made was that an Exchequer grant

of a quarter of a million annually should be voted to take the place of the rate. But this satisfied neither side. After several other abortive proposals, the matter was taken up by Mr. Gladstone in 1868, and a Bill was passed simply abolishing the right of a vestry to compel payment of the rate. This struggle had been continued for forty years, and was of immense value in educating the nation in the true meaning of a Church Establishment, and in enforcing upon Nonconformists their own principles. In this case, again, as in that of the Test Acts, the Nonconformists won because they had on their side the more enlightened public opinion of the country.

Meanwhile they had obtained a further measure of relief by securing a reform of the Marriage Laws, and the provision of civil registration of births, marriages and deaths. They had also helped on the good work of Catholic emancipation, in spite of the fears of some of their leaders. While the Government of the day frankly admitted that they made the concession to Catholics because they feared that otherwise they would have civil war in Ireland, the Nonconformists as frankly took up the ground that religious liberty should be granted to all. Daniel O'Connell, speaking at a meeting of the Protestant Society, acknowledged on behalf of the people of Ireland the help thus received. "I stand here," he said, "in the

name of my country to express our gratitude, in feeble but in sincere language, for the exertions made in our behalf by our Protestant Dissenting brethren. I have come here to express my thankfulness for the support which they have given to the great cause of my country."

From early in the nineteenth century until the present day the question of Education has sharply divided Anglicans and Nonconformists. The latter have often been reproached with neglecting education, but the reproach comes badly from those who saw to it that till about the end of the eighteenth century no school could be opened except under the licence of a bishop. When Nonconformists once had the opportunity, they lost no time in making use of it. It was in 1797 that Joseph Lancaster, a young Quaker, started his schools for poor children, and, in two years' time, he had a thousand pupils under instruction. In 1808 a Society was formed to extend and carry on these schools, and it afterwards became the British and Foreign Schools Society. It was managed on the broadest religious principles, and laid the foundation of that simple Bible teaching, or undenominational religious instruction which, in practice, has proved so easy and useful a thing, but in theory, and in the eyes of its opponents, is so terrible a bugbear. From the first the system was bitterly opposed in the Established Church,

and Churchmen, as they could not suppress the schools, were forced to rival them. As a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* said, "The great exertions of the Dissenters stirred up a corresponding spirit in the Church." In 1811 the National School Society was founded with the express purpose of training the children of the poor in the principles of the Church of England. The two systems, sectarian and unsectarian, thus went on side by side. They were both voluntary agencies, but the great wealth at the disposal of the Established Church enabled her to do far more for her schools than the Nonconformists found possible. By neither party, however, was the work well done, and the revelations of a special Commission in 1848 persuaded even Nonconformists that State education had become a necessity if the work was to be adequately taken in hand. Up to that time several attempts to give State aid, in some more generous fashion than the provision of building grants, had been made. But they had all been on the basis of giving more public money to the Church of England and of increasing clerical control over the schools. They were all defeated by the Nonconformist agitation against them. By this time the Free Churches had begun to understand that it was useless to attempt to work for religious freedom and equality, while, all the time, the control of education by one Church was being perpetuated. And,

quite apart from the Nonconformists, there were many in the country who entirely agreed with Lord John Russell when he said, in the year 1843, "When in 1808 a society was established the principle of which was that no creed or liturgy, established by human authority, should be a part of instruction in their schools—that the Bible alone should be taught there in connection with religion—but that the ministers of the Church or the different religious persuasions should be at liberty to inculcate their own peculiar doctrines elsewhere—when that society was established, he must say he thought it was a misfortune to the country that their principles had not become predominant."

It was in 1870 that Mr. Forster's Act set up a system of State education by providing for Board Schools under public management side by side with existing voluntary schools, and giving them power, if they wished, to enforce the attendance of all children between the ages of five and twelve. The crux of the Bill was in the clauses dealing with religious teaching. As originally drafted these gave absolute discretion to the local authority, they might have any religion or no religion taught. The proposal roused the bitter hostility of the Birmingham League, a powerful body of Nonconformists led by men like Henry Richard, Edward Miall, and R. W Dale. The League put

forward its own programme of free, compulsory, and secular education, which, though premature, was certainly logical, and, so far as the first two items of it are concerned, has now become the law of the land. The League represented the feeling of most Nonconformists in objecting strongly to the State support of any kind of religious teaching. A compromise was arrived at in the famous Cowper-Temple amendment, which provided that no Catechism or other distinctive formulary should be used in Board schools, and that no money from the rates should be given to Voluntary Schools. At the same time it greatly increased the Parliamentary grant to Voluntary Schools. Nonconformists accepted this as the minimum of concession, but it is an entire mistake to imagine that it ever satisfied them. Mr. Forster's measure represented so immense an educational advance that they were not prepared to wreck it. As time went on it produced some unexpected results. Board schools multiplied, and most Boards undertook the business of simple Bible teaching, which worked extraordinarily well and became popular both with parents and teachers. Many Nonconformists came to acquiesce in it simply because it worked, but they never accepted it in principle, and it was always disliked by the more extreme Anglicans.

In the year 1880 the first point in the Birmingham programme was carried, and

education was made entirely compulsory. The second followed in 1891, and education became free. In common justice it ought at the same time to have been made unsectarian. This was so far recognised among Nonconformists that large numbers of their schools were surrendered to the public authority. In the Church of England, however, the voluntary system had been growing, fed as it was by small concessions from time to time. These were crowned in 1902 by the Act which put the Voluntary Schools on the rates. Thousands of Nonconformists at once took up a position of passive resistance, and, whether they resist or not, they naturally object to being compelled to pay for schools which are under the control of one religious body, and in which their sons and daughters cannot hope to be teachers without accepting the formularies of the Church of England. They entirely agree to-day with the position laid down by Mr. Chamberlain and Dr. Dale in 1870. The former said, "The payment of money out of the rates to the denominational schools would be an infringement of the rights of conscience," and the latter, "What we ask for is education, the best education possible and at any cost for every child in England. But not even at the bidding of a Liberal Ministry will we consent to any proposition which, under cover of an educational measure, empowers one religious

denomination to levy a rate for teaching its creed and maintaining its worship." It is easy to sneer at this protracted squabble over religious education, but to do so argues a very imperfect understanding of the issues. The fight is one between the forces of progress and the forces of reaction. The principles of religious equality and religious freedom are at stake in it, and Nonconformists would be false to all their traditions did they not continue to work for a system of education which shall be, at least, unsectarian, as well as compulsory and free.

From elementary education the Nonconformists next turned their attention to secondary. It had long been one of their most serious grievances that they were shut out from the older Universities. They had done great things for the education of their ministry in providing academies and colleges, and they had made considerable use of the facilities for higher education open to them in London and Scotland. But they wanted more, and they were now strong enough to get it. In spite of the veiled opposition of Mr. Gladstone, there was introduced in 1871 a Government Bill which abolished all ecclesiastical and theological tests for professors, tutors, fellows, and scholars at Oxford and Cambridge. Clerical fellowships were still retained, however, and members of the Theological Faculty were still obliged to be clergymen of the Church

of England. As Mr. Herbert Paul says, "The Act would have had greater success if it had been bolder and more comprehensive. But such as it was, it did much more than remove a Dissenter's grievance. It made Oxford and Cambridge really representative of the country, not merely of the predominant Church. It gave them the fresh intellectual air which was the thing they chiefly needed; it freed all studies, except Divinity, from the cramping influence of a sectarian system; and it taught the lesson that contact with all forms of opinion is no danger to honesty or to faith." Since the removal of the tests Nonconformists have gone up to Oxford and Cambridge in ever-increasing numbers, and there are now some five or six hundred of them at each University. They have also established theological colleges in both places. But the anomaly still remains that, however eminent as teacher or scholar in theology a Nonconformist may be, he cannot obtain a theological degree, or share in the work of the Theological Faculty. During the last twenty years at Oxford Nonconformist students have won the University Theological prizes at the rate of more than two per year, and yet these men still remain under the restrictions indicated. The founding of free Theological faculties in London, Manchester, and Wales, and their entire success, has shown the better way, and it is to be hoped that it will not be long

before the older Universities follow the example thus set.

Another grievance which Nonconformists had long felt very keenly was removed by the Burials Acts of 1852 and 1880. Before the former date there were no public burial-grounds except the churchyards. A few chapels had small private burial-places attached to them, and there were a few held by private companies. But in most places, when Nonconformists had to bury their dead, it was with the help of the clergyman and under the rites of an alien Church. In 1852 a Bill was passed enabling Corporations to provide public burial-places containing consecrated and unconsecrated ground and chapels. Naturally, however, these were only provided in populous districts, and the Act did nothing to remove the trouble felt in the villages. In 1880, therefore, it was enacted that burials should be permitted in parish churchyards, either without any religious service, or with such Christian and orderly service as those in charge of the funeral might desire. None of the evils predicted have followed from this very obvious concession, and it has finally closed a most painful and unnecessary controversy.

The gradual and steady advance of the Nonconformist policy which these concessions represent could not but weaken the position of the Anglican Church as an

Establishment. A natural consequence of this was that Free Churchmen were encouraged to attack the principle of the Establishment itself. As early as 1811 the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty was founded, and it played a great part in securing the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. It was followed in 1844 by the formation of the British Anti-State Church Association, which afterwards became the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control. For many years the leading spirit in this Society was the Rev. Edward Miall, who, as editor of the *Nonconformist* newspaper, did very much to educate Nonconformists in their own principles, and to inspire them to take action in their defence. Miall was an extremely effective writer and speaker, and his incessant attacks on the abuses of the Establishment produced a great effect on the younger generation of Nonconformists. The older ministers, though they were very much alarmed at the time by the spread of the Tractarian movement within the Church, were by no means inclined to follow Miall. He was a Radical, and they were not. He was a disturber of the peace of Israel, and they preferred to let sleeping dogs lie. However, the future was with the man of energy and convictions, and the positions for which Miall contended were gradually adopted by all thinking Non-

conformists. They came to see that, so long as the State Church existed, there was no real security for religious freedom, and they discovered how great an anomaly was an Established Church when it only commanded the support of a fraction of the population.

It was the growth of convictions like these which prepared the way for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church. Ireland then, as now, was predominantly Catholic, and it was computed that scarcely an eighth of the people were connected with the Established Church. When Mr. Gladstone took the question up in 1868 he had a staunch ally in John Bright, who at that time had as much influence with the Liberal electorate as the Prime Minister himself. The recent General Election had shown the country to be fully ripe for the measure as a first instalment of that justice to Ireland that has been so long delayed. The Bill provided for severing the connection between the Church and the State by putting an end to the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts in Ireland, and by taking away from the Bishops their seats in the House of Lords. It was provided also that the Queen in Council should be empowered to recognise any governing body of the Irish Church to which her clergy and laity should agree, and that such body should be incorporated by law. As to disendowment, the property of the Church, so far as it was affected by the Bill, was vested in

Commissioners appointed by Parliament. Private endowments given or bequeathed since 1660 were not to be touched. The Church fabrics and parsonages were handed over to the governing body of the Disestablished Church. Lay patrons were compensated by receiving the full value of their patronage, and beneficed clergy might continue to draw their incomes for life, or receive a sum in commutation. Curates of two years' standing in a parish were also to be compensated, and glebes and tithe-rent charges were to be vested in the Parliamentary Commissioners. At the same time the *regium donum* payments to the Maynooth Catholic College and to the Presbyterians were to cease, and compensation was to be given from the funds of the Disestablished Church. The surplus of this property was to be devoted to the relief of unavoidable calamity not provided for sufficiently by the Poor Law. The Bill easily passed the Commons, but was assailed with the utmost hostility in the Lords. It is a matter of history how near it came to creating the gravest possible constitutional crisis. Finally it was allowed to pass with some alteration in the financial details. It is generally admitted that the Disestablished Church is stronger and more prosperous than ever it was as an Establishment. The Irish Church to-day is an object-lesson in the truth of John Bright's words: "The past and present State alliance with religion is hostile to

religious liberty, preventing all growth and nearly destroying all vitality in religion itself."

From Ireland we may turn to Scotland. In that country Free Church convictions were of comparatively late growth. In the days of the Stuarts the struggle was one between Episcopacy and Presbytery, but the Covenanters, who made so magnificent a fight against the imposition of an alien Church, were State Churchmen to a man. When the struggle was over and Scotland had her Presbyterian Church by law established, all the life and fire seemed to die out of it. From the Revolution in 1688 onwards the rule of the Moderate in the Scotch Church was supreme. And the rule of the Moderate meant a positive hatred of anything like Evangelical enthusiasm and a fear of all theological change, combined with a deep respect for the principle of Establishment. It was a highly respectable, unemotional and very decorous type of religion that then prevailed. In the Settlement of 1688 many of the Episcopal incumbents became Presbyterian in order to retain their positions, and these, and their followers, were no source of strength. But the sleep of stagnation did not remain long unbroken. Early in the eighteenth century, John Glas, a Dundee minister of rare spirituality and devotion, challenged the Covenanting position. He taught that there was no Scripture warrant for an Established

Church, that the civil magistrate had no authority in religious matters, and that the imposition of a creed was not a Christian thing. After a long controversy, in which Glas was warmly supported by his congregation, he was deposed from his ministry in the Church of Scotland, and founded an independent Church which was known as Glasite. A similar awakening on the theological side is marked by the Sandemanians, a community founded by John Sandeman, a son-in-law of Glas. More important, however, than either of these were the Marrow men, so called from the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, a compilation of Puritan Theology by one Fisher, a chaplain in Cromwell's army. About 1718 this was republished in Scotland by Thomas Boston, the author of the *Fourfold State* and other books. It at once became popular among ministers, and caused something like an Evangelical revival. In consequence it was condemned by the Assembly, and the ministers who accepted it were "admonished and rebuked." Among these was Ebenezer Erskine, the son of an English ejected minister, who became the leader of the first secession from the Established Church. The cause of it was the question of patronage, and the immediate occasion an enactment by the Assembly of the Kirk in 1731 that, in case a patron failed to present to a vacant living, the presentation should be made by the elders and heritors

(*i.e.* landholders of the district). Erskine protested against this in the interests of the Church and "as giving a wound to the authority of Christ." The Assembly therefore suspended him. He and three other ministers then formed the first Associate Presbytery at Gairney Bridge, near Kinross, in the year 1733.

This was the beginning of the Secession Church, which for many years exercised a profound influence on the life of the Scotch people. It was a Voluntary Church dependent on the freewill offerings of the people, and independent of any State control. But it was at first Voluntary in practice rather than in principle. It clung to the Covenants with pathetic insistence, and it was not without much discussion and after long hesitation that the Covenants were first freed from the clauses which insisted on the supremacy of the State in religious as well as in civil affairs, and afterwards made optional for those who joined the Secession Churches. The history of this process is too long and intricate to recount here, but it is a very interesting example of the gradual victory of the Voluntary principle. In the year 1747 a controversy arose within the Secession Church on the lawfulness of taking the oath administered to burgesses in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth, in which reference was made to "the true religion presently professed within this realm." This was in-

terpreted by some to mean the Established Church, and by others merely the Protestant faith. So arose the Burgher and Anti-Burgher sections of the Secession Church. Early in the nineteenth century the breach was healed, and the United Secession Church formed. It was from this Church that James Morison was expelled in 1845 for his broad views on the Atonement, and founded the Evangelical Union of Scotland. Thomas Carlyle was brought up in the Secession Church, and it is of one of its chapels that he wrote: "That poor temple of my childhood is more sacred to me than the biggest Cathedral then extant could have been; rude, rustic, bare, no temple in the world was more so: but there were sacred lambencies, tongues of authentic flame which kindled what was best in one, what has not yet gone out." Side by side with the Seceders grew up the Relief Church, founded by Thomas Gillespie, a minister who was deposed for refusing to take part in the installation of a pastor appointed against the will of the people. Gillespie had been trained by Philip Doddridge and was of a more Catholic temper than most of the Covenanting clergy. He gave the name Relief to his Churches because their aim was relief from the oppression of patronage. In 1847 his Churches united with the Seceders and formed the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

But the question of appointing minister

by patronage had other and more important results still. During the early part of the nineteenth century the Assembly of the Scotch Kirk had become somewhat more favourable to the system. But in 1834, under the guidance of Dr. Chalmers, the Assembly passed the Veto Act, which was contrived in order to determine the rights of the people without interfering with those of the patrons. It provided that if a majority of male communicants who were heads of families objected to the patron's nomination, the presbytery might refuse to ordain, and intimate to the patron that the Church was still vacant. A case of the kind came up at Auchterarder, where the patron and his nominee refused to accept the Veto Act, and took the matter into the Civil Courts More than once the Courts declared in favour of the patrons and against the people. In 1842 the Assembly issued a Claim of Right, remonstrating against the encroachments of the Civil Courts, and questioning the legality of some of their decisions. At the same time efforts were made to get Parliament to interfere, but without avail. In 1843, when the General Assembly met in Edinburgh, a protest was laid on the table before the Queen's Commissioner, setting forth the wrongs of the Church, and declaring the intention of the signatories to form a new organisation as the Free Church of Scotland. When the protest was read a large number

of ministers and laymen, led by Dr. Chalmers, left the Assembly and proceeded, amid vast crowds in the street, to another place of meeting, where the Free Church of Scotland was constituted. Those who took this action cut connection with the State altogether; they abandoned churches, manses, glebes, and stipends, because they could not brook State interference with the Crown rights of Jesus Christ. It was a magnificent demonstration of the Free Church principle. Four hundred and seventy out of the twelve hundred ministers of the Kirk joined it, along with all the foreign missionaries and a great number of laymen in all parts of Scotland. Many of them suffered not a little, but the new Church grew apace. It was splendidly organised from the first, Dr. Chalmers being a master hand at the work. His sustentation fund for the support of the ministry was a model of its kind, and amply secured the object aimed at from the beginning. Both the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church continued to flourish side by side until the year 1900, when they determined to join hands, and became the United Free Church. The union was entered into with enthusiasm by all but a small minority of Free Church ministers, mostly in the Highlands, who contended that the union violated the trusts under which their property was held. The Scotch Courts decided against them, but when the

matter was taken to the House of Lords the decision was in their favour. The Lords held that the Free Church was to be regarded simply as a Trust, and that among the articles of association were the Principle of Establishment, which had never been repudiated, and the doctrines of election and predestination as taught by the Confession of Faith. They held that union with the United Presbyterian Church violated these articles, because it left the relation of the Church to the State an open question, and because the Declaratory Act of the United Presbyterian Church was inconsistent with the Confession of Faith. The result was that the dissentient ministers and congregations, less than thirty in number, were adjudged to be the true Free Church (Wee Frees, they were popularly called), and all its property was handed over to them, consisting of over a thousand churches and manses, and other property valued at ten million pounds. The situation thus created was an impossible one, and Parliament was compelled to interfere. The greater part of the property was restored to the United Free Church, and it has rapidly recovered from this unexpected set-back at the beginning of its career. At the same time the Established Church has shown great signs of activity, and negotiations are again on foot for the reunion of Presbyterianism in Scotland. That this will be brought about at some not very distant date is practically certain,

but, whether by concessions to the principle of Establishment on the part of the United Free Church, or by the disestablishment of the Kirk, no one would venture to predict.

The story of the Presbyterian Church in England in modern times may be very briefly told. After the lapse into Unitarianism in the eighteenth century there were very few orthodox Presbyterian Churches left. Such as there were were constantly reinforced by additions from Scotland, and in 1876 the Presbyterian Church of England was formally set up with the countenance and on the model of the United Presbyterian Church. Though largely a Scotch Church, it has attracted to itself many English people, and has grown to considerable influence, especially in London and in the large towns in the North. It has a cultured and able ministry, a large Sustentation Fund, and an admirably equipped mission in China. Like their namesakes in an earlier generation, many of these modern Presbyterians are not Free Churchmen in the strict sense of the term. They believe in the principle of a State Church, though all their affinities are with the Free Churches of England, and time will, no doubt, gradually bring them round to the full Free Church position, which is quite compatible with a strong sense of responsibility for the national well-being on the part of the Churches.

The Congregational and Baptist "interests"

in Scotland owe much to the work of the brothers Robert and James Haldane. These were young laymen who, under the impulse partly of the French Revolution and partly of the Evangelical revival, carried on a great Evangelistic mission in the east and north of Scotland from the year 1789 onwards. They gathered great crowds to hear them, and, in spite of opposition from the Established Church, their movement prospered. In time James Haldane adopted Baptist principles, and his brother Robert, with his followers, founded the Scottish Congregational Union. The Haldanes, however, were Free Church in practice rather than in theory. When Dr. John Brown refused in the year 1833 to pay the tax for the support of the Established Church ministers, Robert Haldane denounced his conduct as "rebellion against Christ," and was warmly commended for his action by Dr. Chalmers. For all that, he and his brother are practically responsible for the foundation of the Congregational and Baptist Churches in Scotland, Churches which have maintained a good testimony to the principles of religious freedom and the doctrines of grace. The fact that they have played a much smaller part in Scotland than in England is due to the excellence of the Presbyterian system. In modern times, at least the Presbyterian Churches have shown no little power of adaptation to new circumstances. They have become more

and more Congregational in practice by respecting the autonomy of the individual Church. There has also grown up a much more friendly feeling between the Established and Free Churches in Scotland. The Established Church is far more tolerant than it once was, and co-operation between the two is frequent and cordial. The situation is thus quite different from that which obtains in England.

It may be said that by the end of the nineteenth century the principle of religious liberty had won its way into full recognition. The Free Churches have, therefore, become less negative in their attitude, and have been able to turn their attention to constructive endeavour. While this has meant a certain slackening of zeal in regard to Church Establishment and similar questions, it has meant also an increase in spiritual force and social service. The Churches are beginning to turn from their rights to their duties. While they will not be slow to assert the former whenever the occasion requires it, they are, for the moment, more concerned to grapple with the moral and spiritual problems with which our modern civilisation confronts them. It is their growing ability for such a task which makes their future full of hope

CHAPTER XII

THE PRESENT TIME

During the latter half of the nineteenth century the Free Churches made great and rapid progress. With the removal of various disabilities came a new spirit of hope and energy. Chapels were erected all over the country. The little old meeting-houses tucked away in back streets gave place to large and commodious buildings. Sunday Schools multiplied and became more efficient. The Missionary Societies, founded at the time of the Evangelical revival, greatly increased the scope of their operations and laid siege to the whole of the heathen world. The great preachers of Nonconformity began to take the place that their powers and influence entitled them to. Men like Spurgeon and Dale, each in his own way, left a deep mark on the history of his time, and counted for more than many men who bulked much more largely in the popular mind. The principles of religious liberty and equality, for which the Nonconformists had fought so long a fight, came gradually and tacitly to be recognised as part of the heritage of the British people. Here and there, no doubt, Nonconformists will still often be subject to certain social disadvantages, and where possible the opportunity will be taken to

exercise various petty forms of persecution. But public opinion is against anything of the kind, and there is every prospect that it will become more and more rare. At the same time the attitude of Nonconformists themselves has become less negative and pugnacious than it was. The gradual abandonment of the names Nonconformist and Dissenter, and the substitution for them of "Free Church," is significant of a change that is being felt through the whole religious life of the country. It is recognised by Nonconformists that their position cannot be expressed only by negative terms. Opposition to the Established Church is by no means their sole *raison d'être*. They stand for certain positive principles of Church life and religious belief, and their object is to extend these rather than to antagonise any other body of Christians. With Anglicans as such they have no quarrel; but they have a quarrel with the principle of the State establishment of religion. They believe it to be contrary to the very genius of Christianity that it should require the countenance and support of the State, and they believe that the State connection is a real hindrance to the spiritual development of the Church. They know that this view of the matter is shared by many Anglicans, and they feel with them that in advocating disestablishment they are acting in the highest interests both of religion and of the Church itself.

It must be admitted, however, that the relations between the Free Churches and the Anglican Church have been very greatly complicated by the great success of that Anglo-Catholic revival popularly known as the Oxford Movement. While this has given new life and force to the Church of England, it has tended to emphasise the separation between that Church and all others. The sacerdotal and sacramentarian ideas on which it is based, and its insistence on the necessity of the historic episcopate, have given to the Church a spirit of exclusiveness and arrogance which have been most unfortunate. While there are many High Churchmen who are better than their creed, and are willing to fraternise with Nonconformists, and even, on occasion, to co-operate with them, there are many others who can only count them as "heathen men and publicans." The organ of their party, *The Church Times*, seldom speaks of Nonconformity without a sneer, and deliberately adopts the attitude that the Church of England is the religion of England. It is this temper that is responsible for the religious difficulty (so called) in the schools, and that perpetuates our unfortunate divisions. As long as it exists, co-operation with Anglicans can only be occasional and sporadic, and anything like corporate reunion is a dream. The Free Churches are always ready to meet Anglicans on equal terms, and to work hand

in hand with them in any cause which will further the Kingdom of God On both sides, however, there is need for more knowledge one of the other, for more charity, and for a better mutual understanding. These things are slowly but surely coming about, and with time and patience, and the gradual removal of causes of dissension, we may come to see a better spirit predominating, and a more real unity among the various representatives of the Christian name.

There is no doubt that the Free Churches have suffered from their very freedom. While they have been characterised by a fine enterprise and by a real adaptability to new conditions, they have also tended to develop too great an individuality. Their liberty has sometimes degenerated into licence, and their independence into impatience of all control. The various denominations have gone their way and done their work too often without any regard to others who were working in the same field, and even individual Churches have sought their own prosperity and been quite heedless of how their neighbours fared. This has been especially the case among the Congregationalists and Baptists, with whom the autonomy of the local Church is very jealously guarded. In these denominations the difficulty was partly met by the foundation of the Congregational and Baptist Unions, in both of which the tendency of later years has been strongly in the direction

of closer federation and connexionalism. Even the most Independent Churches found that it was necessary for them to stand together as one body, and for the strong to help the weak. Their union has enabled them to build churches and found missions, to raise the status of the ministry and to give advice and help to churches in poor or sparsely populated districts. At the same time it has given them a sense of corporate fellowship and a platform, which have enabled them to become conscious of their strength, and to influence public opinion in a way that would have been impossible to them as isolated atoms. At the same time nothing has been done to interfere with the autonomy of the individual Church in spiritual things. It is accepted as axiomatic that the government of the Church shall be in the hands of those who are members of the Church and not with any outside authority. This principle has gradually come to be recognised in all the Churches. Among the Presbyterians and many of the Methodist bodies the individual Church is practically autonomous in religious matters, and even in the Church of England there is a marked growth of public opinion in favour of giving to the laity a much greater share in the management of Church affairs.

A great step in the direction of the closer federation of the Free Churches was taken in the year 1892, when the National Free

Church Council was formed. This was a genuine federation of all the Evangelical Free Churches. It was brought about by the desire for closer intercourse and common action which was keenly felt in the larger Free Church denominations. Expression to this had been given at various meetings and conferences, and under the guidance of men like Hugh Price Hughes and Charles Berry it was crystallised into action. The Association comprises Churches of every type, and no difficulty has been experienced in getting them to stand together on a common platform and to take united action in defence or furtherance of Free Church principles. One immediate effect of it has been to enable the different Churches and their leaders to know and understand one another better, and to set on foot measures for preventing unnecessary rivalry and overlapping among the Free Churches. The Council has also rendered good service in giving to Free Churchmen a suitable opportunity for the defence and exposition of their principles, and in applying them to the social and political needs of the time. Its strength in this direction was abundantly demonstrated by the campaign undertaken against the reactionary education policy of the Conservative Government of 1902. It enabled the Free Churches to discover a solidarity and a determination which stood them in good stead. Though the Education Act could

be accurately described as the "Government's triumph over the Nonconformists," it was a dearly bought victory, for it was the spirit of resistance which it had brought forth in the Nonconformists which afterwards drove the Government from office. The Free Church Council is often regarded as a merely political institution, and in many quarters is greatly blamed for its political activities. It was perhaps unfortunate that so early in its history it should have been driven into political action of a pronounced kind. But in this it was only following the traditional Nonconformist example. When political action threatens religious liberty or the cause of righteousness and truth, then Free Churchmen will always be compelled to assert themselves. To them, citizenship means more than any party programme. They cannot view it apart from the sanctions of their faith. Lord Palmerston was speaking the truth when he said: "In the long run English politics will follow the consciences of the Dissenters." The offence of the Free Church Council is that to this despised Nonconformist conscience it has given an articulate voice. It is a voice which the forces of privilege and reaction have every reason to fear.

Primarily, however, the Free Church Council exists for purposes which are purely spiritual. It is an association of Churches concerned chiefly for the objects for which those Churches themselves exist. Its main work is

the propagation of Evangelical principles. Part of its regular organisation is the arranging for missions to be carried out systematically up and down the country, and at its annual Conferences the main topics of discussion are those which bear on the spiritual life and aims of the Churches. One of its most notable achievements has been the preparation of the Evangelical Free Church Catechism, a document which has revealed a surprising amount of agreement among the Free Churches on the theological expression of their faith. The work of the Council so far has certainly done much to help on the cause of reunion among the Churches. It has made possible that mutual knowledge and respect which are a condition precedent of all attempts at reunion, and it has provided the opportunity for practical co-operation. It is now recognised that anything like uniformity among the Churches is an impossible dream, but that a unity of spirit, aim and service is well within the range of practical politics. The reunion of certain of the Methodist denominations, of the United Presbyterian and Free Churches in Scotland, the constant co-operation of Congregational and Baptist Churches in this country and the schemes of reunion that are being ventilated in Canada and Australia, all these point in the direction of something even closer than a federation of the Free Evangelical Churches. On the mission field this has already been ac-

complished. There, too, friendly co-operation with the Anglican Church is more frequent and more possible than under existing conditions it can ever be at home. The recent Edinburgh Missionary Conference was a striking demonstration of the fundamental unity of Christendom, and in the minds of many pointed the way to a much closer co-operation in service for the future. We do not overlook the obstacles which still have to be reckoned with, but we have to record a notable advance in the spirit which would emphasise the agreement among the Churches rather than their differences, and would accept the help and service of all those who profess and call themselves Christians.

The advance of this spirit among Nonconformists is the more hopeful because they have now become so large a part of the Christian forces in the world. From the most recent available statistics, those of the year 1910, we can gather some idea of their strength in comparison with one another and with the Anglican Church. Taking the sixteen leading Free Churches in England and Wales, and comparing these alone with the Anglican Church, we find the following results. In church accommodation the Free Churches have 8,788,285 sittings, while the Anglican Church has 7,236,423 sittings. The Anglican Church has 2,231,753 communicants, and the Free Churches have 2,125,275. The Free Churches have 406,764

Sunday-school teachers, and the Anglican Church has 212,712. The Free Churches have 3,393,118 Sunday-school scholars, and the Anglican Church has 2,494,227. The international statistics show, of course, a much greater disparity in the numbers. If we take only the four leading Free Church denominations—viz. the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists—we find that these have between them 21,862,092 communicants, 1,316,449 Sunday-school teachers, and 16,225,912 Sunday-school scholars. The figures for the Church of England are: 4,022,493 communicants, 262,303 Sunday-school teachers, and 2,932,014 Sunday-school scholars. These figures include the United Kingdom, the British Colonies, the United States of America, and India. They show at least that while in the British Isles the Free Churches have raised themselves to a position of numerical equality with the Anglican Church, in the English-speaking world they have far surpassed it. Taking them all together, however, these figures cannot be regarded as satisfactory. They represent far too small a proportion of the population; and if we compare them with those of previous years, we find that they do not indicate a growth commensurate with the growth of population, and that—at present, at least—the Free Churches are doing little more than mark time and holding the ground they have won. We do not find

anywhere a decided increase in numbers, and in some cases there is a positive decline. It is a familiar truth that history repeats itself, and the history of the Church is no exception to the rule. There also progress is never by a steady advance all along the line, but by action and reaction, by ebb and flow. It would certainly seem that we have now reached a period of religious reaction, of an ebb-tide in spiritual things. It does not need any show of statistics, any counting of heads, to prove to us that the great mass of the people of this country are profoundly indifferent to all the Churches and to religion as represented by them. The advance in scientific discovery and in temporal well-being has brought about a spirit of practical materialism which tends to make religion both unnecessary and unreal. It is quite true, as every careful observer must realise, that this is only part of a general decadence that marks our modern civilisation. It is by no means confined to this country, nor does it affect only the Free Churches. These, however, from their very nature, are the more likely to suffer from it. They cannot live save in an atmosphere of reality. The unrest which is so marked a feature of religious life at the present day is due largely to the efforts which the Churches are making to readjust themselves to the new circumstances and conditions. They are showing that they have that adaptability to fresh

surroundings that is the surest sign of life, and the situation must be judged accordingly.

On the intellectual side profound and far-reaching changes have already taken place in the attitude of the Free Churches. They have been helped here by their freedom from bondage to any fixed formularies; but they have never been altogether free There is a bondage of tradition which can be as hard as that of the letter, and the process of emancipation has been marked by some severe and protracted struggles. In most of the Free Churches at the beginning of last century the Calvinistic tradition was predominant. In all of them the source of authority was the Bible, regarded as literally and verbally inspired. But the new wine of modern thinking was too strong for these old bottles. The immense advance in natural science, with its reinterpretation of the history of the Universe and of the nature of man, and the application of the historical and critical method to the Christian sources, made some theological reconstruction absolutely necessary, if Christianity was any longer to appeal to the more thoughtful section of the community. Among the growing pains of this advance have been the Rivulet controversy, the Davidson case, the Leicester conference, and later the New Theology among Congregationalists, the down-grade controversy initiated by Mr. Spurgeon among the Baptists, and the

Robertson Smith case in Scotland. Of similar import, and much more widely known, were the Colenso case, and the publication of Essays and Reviews in the Church of England. The net result of these controversies has been a gradual transference of emphasis from the doctrinal to the experimental in religion. The process is by no means complete. Among many sections of the Free Churches and among Evangelicals in the Church of England there is an entire absence of theological interest and enlightenment. Men still cling pathetically to the old formularies, and regard every suggestion to alter them as a profanation of the ark of God. Even among the larger Free Churches there is not a little intolerance and a determination on the part of some to make all others accept the theological position with which they agree on pain of being branded as heretics. On the other hand, there is in most of the Churches a theological left wing that seems to love what is new and strange for its own sake, and takes an almost mischievous delight in stating it to others in the most extravagant forms possible. But midway between these two extremes stands the great bulk of Nonconformist opinion, that is neither reactionary on the one hand, nor given to extravagant novelties on the other. Free Churchmen generally regard it as essential that they should maintain liberty in all things and the charity that thinketh

no evil. While they are thoroughly evangelical in spirit, they do not confound their gospel with their theology, and fully recognise the necessity for reconstruction in the intellectual presentation of the truth. They cannot bind themselves to the letter of any ancient creed, and if they accept any formulary at all, it is in a declaratory rather than in an authoritative sense. They believe in the test, "by their fruits ye shall know them," and they view with sympathy every type of Christianity that makes itself felt in changed lives and in the service of mankind. They respect each other's right to think and speak as conscience bids; and while they are ready to criticise those who differ from them, and to show them the better way, they will condemn no man hastily or unheard. They realise that Christianity is a life, and they are concerned to let it have free course and find its expression in varying forms. They believe profoundly in the work of the Holy Spirit, which means to them that God has not exhausted Himself in any of the ancient forms of revelation, but that He is still speaking in these days to all who have ears to hear.

The dangers and difficulties of a position like this lie on the surface. To maintain it in any sound and reasonable way requires real faith, and is something almost beyond the capacity of the average man. Sight is so much simpler and easier than faith. To

accept a verbal statement of a creed and swear to it on all occasions, or to commit oneself to an authoritative Church and let the Church do the thinking while her sons passively accept her conclusions, is for most people the line of least resistance. On the other hand, to keep an open mind is a difficult and uncomfortable thing, especially as it is not always easy to see where it will lead. It is no wonder that many observers attribute the stagnation of the Free Churches at the present time to theological unrest and sigh for the safer dogmatism of a former age. Such an attitude is neither brave nor sane. It is impossible to put back the hands of the clock, and the Churches must be able to speak to the men of to-day in language which they can understand, and in the terms of the current intellectual life, or they will cease to appeal at all. The Free Churches, being less trammelled by credal formulas, have here a very great opportunity, and many of them are using it not unworthily. The unrest of which so much is heard will not trouble us very long. Indeed, it is already giving way to a larger and saner faith which is based on experience and grounded in fact.

But it is not only among the more intelligent middle-class people, where their chief strength has always been, that the Free Churches seem to be losing hold. A far more serious sign of the times is their lack

of progress among the labouring and artisan classes. It is easy to exaggerate the extent of this, and it is only right to remember that in many districts Methodism has a large hold among working folk, and that the Brotherhood and Adult School movements are almost exclusively recruited from the working classes. But when every allowance has been made in this way, it still remains true that the great masses of the wage-earning population are altogether alienated from the Churches, whether Nonconformist or Anglican. The reasons for this are predominantly social. In the large towns working men realise that the Churches belong rather to the order of the employers than of the employed. They are democratic only in name, and both their government and finance are so arranged as to suit the haves rather than the have-nots. In other respects the complaint is made that the Churches are too comfortable and too respectable, and people who are neither of these things do not find in them what they need. The salvation which they preach is said to make too little allowance for a man's bodily needs and material surroundings. In the present state of the industrial world, a gospel which only takes account of things spiritual does not easily commend itself to those who are bearing the heat and burden of the day. Now, exaggerated as these contentions often are, there is much truth

in them. They at least supply quite sufficient ground for the attitude of indifference to religion which is normal among working men. It must not, however, be supposed that the Free Churches are not alive to the facts and deeply concerned to find a remedy for the existing condition of things. Indeed, nothing is more remarkable about their recent history than the extent to which the social implications of Christianity are being studied and emphasised. There is no doubt that a new conscience on this subject is making itself felt, and that it will yet produce great results. Without making any concessions to doctrinaire socialism, the Free Churches are steadily using their influence to improve the conditions of life and labour among the less favoured members of the community. The Settlements connected with the Congregational Churches, the Central Missions of the Wesleyan Methodists, and the magnificent social service department of the Salvation Army are not merely agencies for relieving need of various kinds: they are social experiments, and through them quite as much is learned as is taught. It may be claimed for the Free Churches also that they have had not a little to do with rousing the new social passion which is making itself felt in present-day politics.

At the same time the Free Churches are becoming more conscious of the world-wide scope of their mission. The claims of the

Foreign Field are being felt by the more educated among the younger Nonconformists as never before. While it is true that the work of Foreign Missions is not supported as widely or as adequately as it should be, it is being carried on in a more thorough and statesmanlike fashion than was once the case.

It may be well, now, to conclude this brief and rapid survey by attempting a rough characterisation of the leading Free Churches. The Presbyterians represent a kind of aristocracy among the Free Churches. They are predominantly Scotch in character and they appeal to the more hard-headed and thoughtful of the community. Their ministers are the best trained and the best equipped of all the Free Churches, an average of seven years' preparation being required of them. They are supreme in Scotland and in the North of Ireland, and in England they have a considerable hold in many of the large towns. They have a total membership throughout the world of 5,336,524. Their work, however, is almost entirely confined to the more respectable of the middle class. Among these they are spreading, and their decorous and orderly worship and paternal method of Church government serve to commend them in suburban and well-to-do quarters. They have made very notable contributions to Christian scholarship, and their leaders are men of whom any Church might well be proud. The recent formation of the United Free

Church, and the troubles to which it led, have helped to consolidate Presbyterianism, and the future is full of promise. There is very little doubt that belief in the voluntary principle is growing, and there are more improbable things than that Disestablishment in Scotland may come about by mutual consent. As it is, the two Churches, Free and Established, work together with great harmony, and whenever they become one Presbyterianism will be in a very strong position indeed.

It is difficult to speak of Methodism as a whole and in general terms, yet there is a very real sense in which the Methodist Churches are one amid and in spite of their differences. They have their peculiar genius and they stand for a type. In England, and indeed throughout the world, they are among the most progressive of the Churches. It is often said that the older Wesleyans represent a conservative and respectable temper as against the more democratic Primitives and United Free Methodists. And yet it is among the Wesleyan Methodists that the great popular missions in London, Manchester, Birmingham, and other centres have been established with such extraordinary success. Theologically, Methodism is thoroughly Evangelical and is not greatly enamoured of the modern spirit. It produces good all-round ministers rather than great preachers, and is especially successful in commanding the

services of large numbers of laymen. The itinerant system, in spite of many obvious drawbacks, has the effect of strengthening the weaker Churches and of maintaining a general level of power throughout the denomination as a whole. Whether at home or abroad Methodists are evangelistic in spirit, and through their world's Œcumenical Council are conscious of their world-wide mission. They are by far the largest factor in the religious life of Protestantism, having some 8,865,000 communicants. The sectarian divisions within Methodism are not very important. They show how the same spirit can work under different forms and adapt itself to different circumstances. Of the minor bodies the Primitive Methodists are the most active and progressive. They have a great hold of the working classes in many parts of the country, and through the higher education of their ministry are keeping themselves abreast of the times.

The Congregationalists, again, are very difficult to characterise. It is generally said of them that they appeal to the more educated middle-class people and represent a kind of intellectualism among the Free Churches. At the same time they are missionary in spirit and through Institutional Churches and various kinds of settlements give themselves heartily to work among the poor. They also have large numbers of Churches in the country districts through which they keep

in close touch with the labouring classes. They retain much of the independence and love of liberty which characterised their forefathers and have always been in the front ranks of the fight for religious equality. Latterly, however, they have come to see the need for a closer federation among their Churches. The formation of the County Unions and the provision of funds in aid both of Churches and ministers have led to a much closer organisation and have destroyed the individualism of the old independence. At the same time Congregationalism also has become conscious of its world-wide mission largely through the international councils held from time to time in different parts of the world. They have now 1,444,699 communicants. This tendency towards connexionalism does not mean any abandonment of their original principles. They still stand for the position that the members of a Christian Church should be Christians, and that the sole head of the Church is Jesus Christ. In things theological they allow a wide latitude of opinion, and their general position is broadly Evangelical. They lay more stress on life than on organisation or creed, and though they suffer from the dangers of this liberty their witness in history and in the religious life of to-day fully justifies their attitude.

Much the same may be said of the Baptists who reckon as Congregationalists in ecclesi-

astical polity. Their appeal, however, has always been more popular than that of the Congregationalists proper, and they have reached a membership of 6,195,817. They do excellent work among the lower middle and working-class populations, and they are Evangelical to the core. They tend to a rather stiff form of orthodoxy, but there are many signs which show that they are feeling their way to a broader position. They have always been among the staunchest and most active of Nonconformists, and this country owes them a very real debt for the vigour of their political witness. Like the Congregationalists they have been doing much in recent years to draw their Churches nearer together, to make it more possible for the strong to help the weak, to raise the status of their ministry, and to give to their distinctive witness a more articulate voice. In their root-principle of baptism only on conversion they have what gives to their mission a certain definiteness and strength. But it ought not to divide them from the other Congregational Churches as it does. There is no doubt that the two denominations are drawing much nearer together, and it is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when they will become one.

Among the other denominations the Salvation Army has earned a splendid pre-eminence for its work among the lowest and most degraded of civilised mankind,

and for its wide-reaching philanthropic efforts. There can be little doubt that its military discipline and rough and ready Evangelism, however distasteful to the more cultured, do find a response among those whom seemlier and more orthodox methods fail to reach. The Quakers remain a kind of spiritual elect, clinging as they do to the doctrine of the inner light. They have an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. Their unwavering testimony in the cause of peace and their bold experiments in social service have put all the Churches in their debt. There are signs, too, of a revival among them, led by their younger members. These are adapting themselves to modern conditions and preparing the way for a yet greater service in the future. The Plymouth Brethren, Particular Baptists, and several other small sects, stand for the old orthodoxy based on the verbal inspiration of the scriptures. Their position is represented in some small degree in most of the Free Churches and will always attract those who fear new ways and need the support of some external authority. The Unitarians stand for the very opposite view. They are intellectualists pure and simple, and with them religion is a thing of the head rather than of the heart. They have rendered very great service to the cause of the Free Churches by their zeal for education and social reform, and by their steady advocacy of freedom

of theological thought. They appeal mainly to the cultured few, and as a denomination do not make very rapid progress. Their aims and methods naturally keep them apart from the Evangelical Free Churches, but as changes are taking place on both sides it is to be hoped that better relations may be established in the not very distant future. As the range of theological study widens, and the historical and experimental methods come into greater prominence, the hard dogmatic attitude which has characterised both sides alike is found to be no longer possible. And as it comes gradually to be understood that belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ depends not so much on philosophical interpretations of His Person and place in the Godhead, as on the Christian's personal faith in and devotion to Himself, the old Unitarian controversy loses much of its point and meaning. There will always be a great gulf fixed between those to whom Jesus Christ is a mere man among men, and those to whom He has the religious value of God. Meanwhile Christians of all types will do well to cultivate a larger charity in their relations with each other, remembering always the words of their Master, "He that is not against us is on our side."

It very often seems to the outsider that the Free Churches present a picture of almost hopeless confusion and that their divisions are a grave cause of weakness. But they

are not in the least conscious of this themselves. Apart from the Unitarians and one or two very small sects, the great mass of them are entirely at one in spirit and aims. They are Evangelical in the best sense of the word, and they have not the least difficulty in working together. They recognise that some of the old causes of division are no longer operative. They are hoping that it will, therefore, be possible for them to draw nearer one another, and in some cases even to unite. But they do not regard their differences of organisation as any real hindrance to the unity of the spirit and to common service. They realise that they are much better off than the Anglicans, who within the bonds of a rigid uniformity are more seriously divided. The variety in the Free Churches has no taint of disloyalty about it, but is the free outcome of their vigorous life. So far as Protestant Christianity is concerned, they believe that the future is with them, and they have no fear of the changes it may bring. They are prepared to adapt themselves readily to new circumstances and conditions, and their adaptability again is a sign of life. At the same time they are loyal to their traditional faith. They stand for spiritual freedom above all things, for the right of the individual to enter into personal communion with the Divine and to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. They have no feeling of hostility to any other

Church, but are willing to live and let live. To them the Church is a spiritual body, and the only Head and Foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ. Therefore they are against the principle of State Establishment because it means secular control in spiritual things and is an infringement of the Crown rights of the Lord Jesus. They cannot admit the claim of any Church, simply because it is established, to a regularity and authority which they do not possess themselves. It is by their fruits that Churches should be judged and not by any position of privilege they may have attained. In refusing to conform and in actively seeking the Disestablishment of the Anglican Church they are animated by no desire to see that Church injured or humiliated, but rather wish to set it free to give its testimony and to do its work. If it be urged that once the Church is disestablished Nonconformists will no longer have any *raison d'être*, they cannot agree. There will always be room for the more democratic ideal of Church government and fellowship which, in their various ways, they represent. They have proved the worth of their principles and methods by experience, so that these have come to have a positive value of their own. They can appeal confidently to the contribution they have made to the religious life and progress of the world as their best justification. Though they have to face some very difficult problems

in the immediate future, and are always confronted with the necessity of reconstructing their theological position, they do not lose heart or hope. At the present time they are showing their determination to meet the needs of the hour by fresh efforts and new enterprises. Their history is a perpetual source of encouragement and inspiration. They believe in the continual guidance of the Spirit of God, and in that belief they are prepared to go forward conquering and to conquer.

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INDEX

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Pelmanism as an Intellectual and Social Factor.

IT is occasionally urged that in the announcements of the Pelman Institute the business element is predominant, and that other aspects of Mind Training receive less consideration than they are entitled to.

The reason for this is fairly obvious. Business or professional progress is, in this workaday world, a subject which the average man or woman has very much at heart. Consequently, the financial value of Pelmanism is the point of primary attraction for probably 60 per cent. of those who enrol; but this circumstance does not in any degree dispossess Pelmanism of its supreme importance as an educational and intellectual factor. Instead of a few pages of explanation, a fairly lengthy volume would be required to do justice to this theme—the *higher* values of Pelmanism.

Far-seeing readers will be quick to appreciate this, and will recognise that a system which has proved of such signal value to the business and the professional brain-worker must perforce be of at least equal value to those whose occupation is mainly intellectual or social. If assurance were needed upon this point, it is abundantly supplied by the large number of complimentary letters received from those who have enrolled for the Course from other than pecuniary motives: the amateur and leisured classes being well represented on the Registers of the Institute.

In many cases, those whose motive originally was material advancement of some kind have been quick to discover the deeper meanings and higher

values of Pelmanism—a value far above money. It would be proper to say that there are many thousands of both sexes to whom the Pelman System has been the means of intensifying their interest and pleasure in existence as probably no other agency could have done.

The charms of literature, and in particular the beauties of poetry and descriptive writing, are appreciated by those who adopt Pelmanism as they never appreciated them before. Every phase of existence is sensibly expanded. Life receives a new and deeper meaning with the unfolding of the latent powers of the mind.

In developing latent (and often unsuspected) powers of the mind, Pelmanism has not infrequently been the means of changing the whole current of a life.

Again, there are numbers who avow their indebtedness to the Pelman Course in another direction—it has led them to examine themselves anew, to recognise their points of weakness or strength, and to introduce aim and purpose into their lives. Indeed, it is surprising how many men and women, including some of high intellectual capacity and achievement, are "drifting" through life with no definite object. This reveals a defect in our educational system, and goes far to justify the enthusiasm of those—and they are many—who urge that the Pelman System should be an integral part of our national education. Self-recognition must precede self-realisation, and no greater tribute to Pelmanism could be desired than the frequency of the remark, "I *know* myself now: I have never really done so before."

As a system, Pelmanism is distinguished by its inexhaustible adaptability. It is this which makes

it of value to the University graduate equally with the salesman, to the woman of leisure and to the busy financier, to the Army officer and to the commercial clerk. The Pelmanist is in no danger of becoming stereotyped in thought, speech, or action: on the contrary, individuality becomes more pronounced. Greater diversity of "character" would be apparent amongst fifty Pelmanists than amongst any fifty people who had not studied the Course.

The system is, in fact, not a mental strait-jacket but an instrument: instead of attempting to impose universal ideals upon its students, it shows them how to give practical effect to their own ideals and aims. It completes man or woman in the mental sense, just as bodily training completes them in the physical sense.

There are many who adopt it as a means of regaining lost mental activities. Elderly men and women whose lives have been so fully occupied with business, social, or household matters that the intellectual side has been partly or wholly submerged: successful men in the commercial world whose enterprises have heretofore left them too little leisure to devote to self-culture: Army officers who find that the routine of a military life invites intellectual stagnation—these find that the Pelman Course offers them a stairway up to the higher things of life.

Here are two letters which emphasise this. The first is from an Army student, who says:

> The Course has prevented me becoming slack and stagnating during my Army life—this is a most virulent danger, I may add. It inculcates a clear, thorough, courageous method of playing the game of Life—admirably suited

to the English temperament, and should prove *moral* salvation to many a business man. "Success," too, would follow—but I consider this as secondary.

The other letter is from a lady of independent means who felt that, at the age of fifty, her mind was becoming less active:

> Though leading a busy life, my income is inherited, not earned. My object in studying Pelman methods was not, therefore, in any way a professional one, but simply to improve my memory and mental capacity, which, at the age of fifty, were, I felt, becoming dull and rusty.
>
> I have found the Course not only most interesting in itself, but calculated to give a mental stimulus and keenness and alertness to one's mind, which is just what most people feel the need of at my age.

In short, it is not merely the fleeting interest of a day that is served by the adoption of Pelmanism, but the interest of a lifetime. One may utilise the Course as a means of achieving some immediate purpose—financial, social, educational, or intellectual,—but the advantages of the training will not end there. The investment of time will bear rich fruit throughout life, and, in addition to serving a present purpose, will enable many a yet unformed ideal to be brought within the gates of Realisation.

"Mind and Memory" (in which the Pelman Course is fully described, with a synopsis of the lessons) will be sent, gratis and post free, together with a full reprint of "Truth's" Report, on application to The Pelman Institute, E, Pelman House, Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C. 1.

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